

A Warrior's Second Chance

Chapter 21-30

A Warrior's Second Chance

The title seemed to land like a stone in still water. A ripple of shifting expressions moved across the room...some guarded, some assessing, others openly skeptical.

“I expect her to be given the maximum accommodation and respect due to her position,” Alexander continued, his gaze sweeping the crowd like a blade.

A long pause followed, filled with the sound of my own heartbeat. Then he glanced at me. Would you like to say something?”

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“Yes,” I said, stepping forward. My voice was steady, though my pulse was a little too quick.” Good evening. I’m honored to stand here as your Luna. I hope to serve alongside Alpha Alexander in leading this pack to greater heights. I’m committed to working with all of you to ensure that happens. With your cooperation, I believe we can strengthen not just our territory, but the bonds between us as one united pack.”

It was the kind of speech I’d been trained to give—measured, respectful, confident. I scanned the faces in front of me, looking for even the smallest sign my words had warmed the air.

Nothing.

More than half of them remained indifferent...their expressions stone. A few weren't bothering to hide their scowls.

One of the elders, a tall man with iron-gray hair and an eagle-like nose, finally spoke. "Luna," he said, the title carrying a hint of reluctance, "the Silver Hollow pack has... a different way of running things. How do you plan to adapt to our ways?"

"I believe leadership is about understanding, not imposing," I replied evenly. "I intend to learn your traditions before making any changes. This is your home as much as it's mine now, and I respect that."

A murmured exchange rippled through a few of them.

Another elder, a woman with sharp eyes and a voice like sandpaper, cut in. "And what of loyalty? Will *your* loyalties be divided between Silver Hollow and us?"

Why in the name of the goddess were they sounding like this was the first case of this kind of alliance?

I kept my chin high. “I am mated to Alpha Alexander. That bond is my loyalty. My commitment is to this pack now.”

That earned a slow, begrudging nod from a few in the back, though others still looked

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unconvinced.

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From the right side of the room, one of the younger leaders asked, “Do you have experience managing disputes between warriors? Our border patrol can get... heated.”

“I’ve mediated disagreements before,” I said. “Every situation is different, but I believe listening first and acting decisively second is the best approach.”

There was a faint smirk on his face, like he was testing me. “Listening first? That might get you walked over.”

“Not if you’re listening to understand and not just to reply,” I said, matching his tone without turning it into a challenge. “People know when they’re truly heard. It changes how they respond.”

That silenced him, though the smirk lingered.

Then a man in the corner, broad-shouldered, crossed his arms. “And what will you do if your decisions conflict with the Alpha’s?”

That question was deliberately meant to corner me.

Before I could speak, Alexander stepped forward slightly, his voice cutting clean through the room. “Any conflict between us will be handled privately. Our unity in public is not up for debate.”

The elder’s mouth snapped shut.

Another question came, this time from an older woman whose expression was neutral but eyes *were* shrewd. “What’s the first change you intend to make as Luna?” This content belongs to Find[N]ovel.net

I smiled politely. “The first thing I intend to do is listen—learn the needs of the pack from those who live them daily. Only then can I make decisions that truly benefit us all.”

It was a safe answer, but I meant it.

That seemed to please her, though from the opposite end of the room came a low, skeptical voice: “Words are easy, Luna. We’ll see about actions.”

The words stung, not because they were wrong, but because they were honest.

Alexander’s gaze shifted toward the speaker, sharp enough to slice the air. “And you will. But some of your questions will have to wait. We have other matters to attend to today.”

It was said so calmly, so decisively, that no one dared argue.

The room went still, then, one by one, the members began to murmur brief welcomes. Some

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were mechanical, like reciting lines in a play.

“Welcome, Luna,” one elder said, his eyes sliding past me almost immediately.

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Another inclined her head slightly. “I look forward to... working together.” The pause told me she was still deciding whether that was true.

A younger man with bright eyes and a genuine smile stepped forward and bowed slightly. “It’s an honor to meet you, Luna.” It was the first welcome that actually felt warm.

I met each of them with the same steady smile, no matter how reluctant they were.

When Alexander finally dismissed them with a short, “That will be all,” they filed out, the air still thick with unspoken judgment.

As the last few left, I let out a quiet exhale and murmured under my breath, “Well... I feel welcome already.”

Alexander glanced at me, voice as cold as ever. “You did a good job.”

It would have been encouraging if there had been even a flicker of warmth behind it. But of course there wasn't. This was Alexander—the man who could make a compliment sound like a weather report.

I rolled my eyes slightly as we turned toward the door. “Your enthusiasm is overwhelming.”

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ALEXANDER

I was halfway down the corridor, my mind already shifting to the peace of my chambers, when I heard quick footsteps behind me.

“Alexander!”

I didn’t have to turn to know who it was. My sister’s voice was unmistakable—light, sharp, and carrying the kind of energy that rarely meant anything good for my quiet evenings.

I stopped and waited, turning just enough to see Irene closing the distance. She always walked like she was on a mission, even if that mission was simply to irritate me.

She fell into step beside me. “So... how’d the big meeting go?”

I kept my pace steady, hands clasped behind my back. “It was not bad.”

Her brows arched. “Not bad? That’s a vague answer for you.”

“It’s accurate,” I said. “The members were... not exactly welcoming to Faye, but they weren’t completely hostile either.”

I could feel her eyes on me, waiting for me to elaborate, so I added, “Nothing I wasn’t expecting ahead of time, of course I wasn’t expecting them to open their arms to her immediately.”

We turned a corner. Irene was quiet for about three steps...an impressive restraint for her before she spoke again.

“So,” she said slowly, “those pack members disrespected Faye?”

I stopped walking and *looked* at her. Was she being serious right now? “Disrespected her? No.”

Her eyes narrowed, like she didn’t believe me for a second.

“Irene,” I said, my voice firm, “they might not be... pleased about Faye. She’s from another pack. And yes, she isn’t the one I was originally meant to be mated to. But that doesn’t mean anyone in that room would dare disrespect my mate in my presence. Unless, of course, they’re ready to lose their heads for it.”

Her lips curved in a faint smile, not because she found me amusing, but because she knew I meant every word. A disrespect to my mate is a disrespect to me, and I don’t take that lightly.

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We reached my chambers, and I pushed the heavy door open. She walked in without waiting for an invitation, heading straight for the couch near the fireplace.

I shut the door behind us, resisting the urge to point out that “entering without being asked” was technically rude. Irene didn’t recognize such boundaries around me.

She sat down, draping one arm over the back of the couch, and gave me a pointed look. “Still

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poor Faye. I can’t imagine how she must be feeling right now, knowing she wasn’t accepted with open arms.”

I crossed the room to the cabinet, poured myself some water, and took a slow sip before answering. “She seemed fine.”

“Fine?”

“Faye strikes me as the strong type,” I said, leaning against the cabinet. “She wasn’t moved by their attitude. Her confidence was... commendable.”

I meant it. She’d stood there, meeting their cold stares head-on, speaking with poise as if she’d been Luna for years. It had been one of the few moments during the meeting where I’d felt something close to pride...though I hadn’t said so aloud.

Irene tilted her head. “That might be true. But just because she didn’t show it doesn’t mean she wasn’t affected. You know how those kinds of stares feel, Alexander. It’s like being measured and dismissed all at once.”

I took another sip, my jaw tightening.

“And,” she added, her tone sharpening, “it’s not helping that you’re not exactly the caring, supportive mate everyone would want in a situation like that.”

I gave her a flat look. “Why would you assume I’m not supportive?”

She gave a humorless laugh. “Please. You know exactly what I’m talking about.”

I didn’t answer right away. She wasn’t entirely wrong, but she made it sound as if I’d stood there like a block of ice for sport.

“I was there,” I said finally. “I spoke for her when I needed to. I made it clear she has my protection.”

“That’s *not* the same as making her feel like she has you. Maybe it’s time you start to let go of your past and warm up to the present.” Irene said quietly.

I set the glass down on the table with a soft click, rubbing the bridge of my nose. “Irene, I’m a bit tired. I’d like to rest for a while.” I knew exactly where this conversation was going, and I

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wasn’t interested in heading there right now...or ever again.

She stared at me for a moment, then sighed. “You’re dismissing me.”

“Correct.”

Her eyes rolled, but she stood anyway. “Fine. But you might want to rest while.

I gave her a look that asked, silently, What now?

She crossed her arms. “Mom called.”

That froze me for a second. “And?”

“She already knows your mate is in Blood Crescent.”

I inhaled slowly. “Of course she does.” She knows everything.

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can.”

“That means,” Irene went on, “she’ll be showing up to meet Faye. Probably sooner rather than later.”

I leaned back slightly, my mind shifting away from exhaustion to the new problem she'd just dropped at my feet. I had almost forgotten about that part—an oversight that now seemed dangerous.

Dealing with Irene was one thing. She was... a storm, but a manageable one. Our mother, however... she was a hurricane that left nothing untouched.

I exhaled through my nose. "Wonderful."

Irene smirked knowingly. "I take it you're thrilled."

"If 'thrilled' means I'd rather face a dozen political disputes than one of her 'welcome visits,' then yes."

She laughed, heading for the *door*. "Well, you'd better start preparing. You and Faye both have

work to do."

She opened the door, glancing over her shoulder with a wicked little grin. "Impressing Mom is a full-time job. Good luck with that."

The door closed behind her, leaving me in the quiet. UPDATE FROM find—novel.net

I sank into my chair, staring into the fire. Irene wasn't wrong, my mother's approval was never freely given—it was earned, fought for, and maintained with constant effort. And she'd be coming here with expectations so high even I felt the weight of them.

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I thought of Faye, standing in front of the pack today, refusing to flinch under their stares. She'd handled that well. But my mother? That would be another test entirely.

One we'd both have to pass.

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FAYE

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I stood barefoot in a meadow bathed in soft golden light, the tall grass swaying around my knees. Jason was there...my Jason, laughing as he held my hand and spun me in slow circles, the sunlight catching the flecks of gold in his eyes.

“You know,” he said with that crooked grin, “our first kid is going to have your stubbornness. I can already see it.”

I laughed. “Only if they get your ridiculous dimples. Otherwise, I’m sending them back.”

We tumbled into the grass, shoulders brushing, warmth wrapping around us like a second skin. I could feel his heartbeat, steady and close, and for a moment I believed it was real.

But then Jason stood, his gaze suddenly fixed somewhere beyond me. “Jason?” I called softly. He didn’t answer.

He began to walk away.

My smile faltered. “Jason?” I called again, louder now, rising to my feet. The wind seemed to swallow my voice.

Ahead, a figure waited—slim, graceful, her back turned. Jason reached her and stopped. The woman turned, and my breath caught.

It was Sage, my twin.

Sage smiled, a glint in her eyes, and Jason didn’t look back.

My voice broke into a desperate shout-

KNOCK KNOCK!

A sharp knock on my door yanked me into the dim light of my room. I blinked, heart pounding, the dream scattering into fragments. Just my memories again... and the ache of knowing they could still trick me this easily.

For a moment, I lay there tangled in the sheets, staring at the unfamiliar ceiling and wondering where I was. I’ve been here for days and I’m yet to get used to the environment.

The knock came again, a little louder this time, impatient without being rude. I groaned softly, dragging myself upright and rubbing the grit of sleep from my eyes. The floor was cool

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beneath my bare feet as I padded across the room.

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When I opened the door, Maya stood there. Her posture was polite but stiff, like she'd practiced standing exactly this way before knocking.

"Good morning, Luna," she said, her tone careful, as though she wasn't sure how I'd react. "I was asked to come let you know that breakfast is ready. Also... after breakfast, I'm supposed to give you a tour around the pack house. You know, in case you'd like to stretch your legs and... familiarize yourself with the environment."

The way she said it, word for word, made it sound rehearsed. Someone...probably Irene...had told her exactly what to say and how to say it.

I squinted at her, still half-asleep, and for a split second wondered why on earth she had to show up this early. But then I glanced over my shoulder at the clock on the wall. Oh! It wasn't early at all, In fact, it was exactly breakfast time. My sense of time clearly hadn't caught up with my new surroundings.

"Oh," I said, clearing my throat. "Right. Tell whoever's waiting at the table that I'll be out in a

bit."

She gave a small nod. "Of course, Luna."

I closed the door and leaned back against it for a moment.

I wasn't sure whether to be grateful for the polite summons or irritated that my mornings were now apparently going to start on someone else's schedule. Probably both.

Shaking it off, I hurried into the bathroom. The mirror didn't lie—my hair was slightly ruffled, falling out of the braid I'd slept in, and a faint crease still marked my cheek from the pillow. Not exactly Luna material.

I splashed cold water on my face, letting it jolt me awake, then brushed my teeth quickly. A shower would have been nice, but I was already late, and I refused to make an entrance looking like I'd overslept.

I unfastened my braid, running my fingers through the waves until they fell loose around my shoulders. The mirror reflected a version of me that looked more like... me. I reached for my brush, working through the tangles until the strands smoothed out, then twisted the front sections back into a half-up style...practical, but still polished. NEW NOVEL CHAPTERS ARE PUBLISHED ON FindNovel.net

“Much better,” I said to myself.

Now came the question of what to wear.

I decided on a simple cream blouse with slightly puffed sleeves and a pair of dark,

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high-waisted trousers. Formal enough to show I cared, but not so stiff that I looked like I was trying too hard.

Slipping them on, I straightened the blouse’s cuffs and added a thin belt. I could already hear my old pack’s whispers if they saw me...“Faye actually cleans up nicely“...as though they’d expected me to show up in something frumpy.

A touch of color wouldn't hurt. I found a muted berry lipstick in the vanity drawer and dabbed it on lightly. Just enough to keep me from looking like I'd been dragged out of bed, which, technically, I had.

I was already impressed as I checked myself out. "Good job, Faye."

By the time I stepped back from the mirror, I almost looked like the sort of woman who belonged at Alexander's side. Almost.

I glanced around the room like I wanted to make sure I didn't forget anything.

Taking a steadying breath, I stepped out into the hallway.

The air was cooler out here, and I could hear the faint murmur of voices from down the

corridor—low, rhythmic conversation punctuated by the occasional clink of cutlery. Breakfast had already started. I guess it wasn't just going to be Irene and I at the table this morning.

Part of me wanted to linger a little, to arrive just late enough to avoid most of the awkward moments of the meal, but I knew that would only give them more reason to judge me. So I squared my shoulders and headed toward the dining room.

Every step felt deliberate, like I was walking into another silent test.

I couldn't help thinking of the meeting with the pack members, the way some of them had looked right through me, as though they didn't see a Luna at all. Alexander's calm, measured presence had been the only thing keeping the tension in check. Without him, I wasn't sure how the day would have ended.

But he wouldn't be here all the time to shield me from sidelong glances or polite-but-sharp comments. I had to learn to manage on my own...I hope I can.

Nova sighed. "You should give yourself more credit, you know? You're doing well so far."

"I hope so, I said.

As I reached the doorway, I paused for half a second, smoothing the front of my blouse.

I pushed the door open and stepped inside.

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FAYE

I was still half in my head when I stepped into the dining room that morning. The smell of coffee and fresh bread floated through the air, warm and welcoming, but the scene waiting for me at the table quickly replaced the comfort with curiosity.

Two women sat there. The first was Irene...of course, Irene...looking as lively as always even with a spoon halfway to her mouth. But the second... I didn't recognize her.

She looked like she'd stepped straight out of a glossy magazine. Her makeup was precise, her hair perfectly styled, her outfit so coordinated it almost made me *check* if I had crumbs on my shirt. She didn't resemble Irene in the slightest—too polished, *too*... staged... almost fake. She reminded me of one of those decorative porcelain dolls: pretty, rigid, *and* somehow unnerving if you stared too long.

And she was staring at me.

Not the normal curious stare you give a stranger in your space. No, her eyes had this sharp, almost repulsed glint in them. As though she'd just seen something dragged out of the forest, dirt-covered and wrong. Her perfectly lined lips parted and she asked, very clearly,

“Who is she?”

No smile, no warmth. Just that blunt, cutting question hanging in the air like smoke.

Irene's head shot up from her plate, and her eyes lit up when she saw me.

“Oh, finally,” she said with a grin, “I was starting to think you'd decided you've had enough of my face in the mornings and skipped breakfast altogether.”

I laughed genuinely, because Irene had that effect on me. “I considered it,” I teased back, “but I figured you'd miss me too much.”

I greeted them both as I made my way to the table. Irene's reply was quick and warm. The other woman's... was barely a response at all. If I could even call the little hum she made a

response.

She was still looking at me like she couldn't decide whether I was lost or just audacious enough to wander into her territory uninvited.

I took my seat, trying not to let her expression crawl under my skin. Still, I couldn't help the thought: Is she really this confused about me, or is she doing it on purpose?

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Irene didn't jump to introduce us right away, which was unlike her. She usually filled silences before they had a chance to form. The mystery woman took advantage of the gap.

"Who is this," she asked again, sharper this time, "and why is she joining us for breakfast?"

I looked at Irene in time to catch the shock flicker across her face. That was when I realized- oh, this wasn't confusion at all. This woman was being rude. Deliberately.

And the question that instantly formed in my head was why?

We'd never met before. As far as I knew, I hadn't done anything *to* offend her. Did she simply dislike strangers? Or... was there something else?

Irene was still staring at her, clearly deciding how to respond, when the woman rolled her eyes like she'd grown bored of waiting. She turned to me, her tone losing any pretense of politeness.

"I'm Bella," she said, like it should mean something to me. "Alpha Alexander's sister... Irene's sister." Her gaze sharpened. "And who are you?"

The words landed heavier than she probably expected. Not because I was intimidated, but because I was surprised.

Alexander had two sisters? Since when? Irene talked a lot, about everything, but she had never once mentioned another sister besides herself.

I glanced at Irene, and she looked... embarrassed. That alone told me this was not going to be one of those friendly introductions where everyone instantly gets along.

Irene was opening her mouth, probably to answer for me, but no. Not this time.

I didn't need her to soften my edges or smooth the tension.

I smiled, calm and deliberate, and spoke before she could,

“Faye,” I said. “Luna Faye of the Blood Crescent Pack.” I’m not sure why I chose to introduce myself like that, but it sounded just right.

I even extended my hand across the table for a handshake, because some part of me wanted to see what she’d do.

What she did was look at me like I’d just slapped her. She was shocked.

The air went still for a moment. Out of the corner of my eye, I caught Irene biting her lip, a smirk tugging at the edges that she was absolutely failing to hide. For some reason, she must have enjoyed the reaction from Bella.

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Bella didn’t take my hand, she didn’t even pretend to consider it. She just let it hang there for a moment, then scoffed quietly, but with enough disdain to make her point—and turned to

Irene.

Irene avoided her gaze entirely and focused on her plate.

I withdrew my hand slowly, not because I felt embarrassed, but because the moment had told me everything I needed to know.

She wasn't just dismissive, she was defensive. Like my existence here was a problem she hadn't prepared to face.

I turned my attention to my own food. If she thought I'd be unsettled by her attitude, she was wrong. I'd dealt with far colder receptions than this since I came to *Blood Crescent*, and truthfully? I was too curious to let it irritate me just yet.

But as I ate, I found myself wondering: Did she not know Alexander had a mate? Or did she know and just... hate it?

Whatever the reason, Bella's appetite seemed to vanish. She pushed her food around on her plate, fumbling with her fork, her eyes darting between me and Irene as though she was trying to read something in the spaces between us.

Weird...very weird.

“Where’s Alexander? Busy again?” I asked Irene, casually.

But Bella answered. “Isn’t he supposed to be your mate? you should know his whereabouts.”

I looked at her, and I just lacked words at that moment.

“Ignore her,” Irene said to me. “Alex went to the gym.”

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Bella pushed her chair back with a sudden scrape against the floor, her eyes cutting away from me like I wasn't even there. Without any preamble, she announced in that clipped tone of hers, "I'll be in Alex's room," she said to Irene, but made sure I heard her loud and clear

I didn't even bother to look at her. I wasn't about to give her the satisfaction of thinking that bothered me one bit. I only heard her footstep as she walked away.

"You know," I said casually, "it seems your sister doesn't like me at all." I glanced at Irene. "And she's nothing like you. This one..." I tipped my chin toward Bella's retreating back, "...is more like Alexander. Which I guess makes you the black sheep of the family."

Irene let out a laugh, a light, amused sound that made me tilt my head. "As apt as that sounds," she said, taking a sip of her water, "Bella's not actually related *to* us. Not by blood anyway. It's just me and Alex our parents had."

That made me look at her more closely. "Really? Then who exactly is Bella?"

Irene smirked, like she knew I'd take the bait.

I felt the need to explain. "I'm just curious. She confidently called herself your sister right in front of you. If it's not true, why let her?"

Irene's smirk flattened into something softer—almost a sigh. She rolled her eyes and shrugged, as though she were tired of explaining this. "Bella's the daughter of my late father's friend. She was... taken in after her parents were killed when the Ironpaw pack attacked the Blood Crescent pack years ago. My father raised her after that."

I leaned back in my chair, the picture clicking together in my mind. That explained the way Bella carried herself, like she belonged, even though the bloodline didn't match.

Still, my chest tightened a little. I couldn't help it, I felt sorry for her. Losing your parents to an attack wasn't something you just "got over." No matter how cold or... well, bitchy she'd just been toward me, that kind of loss stayed in your bones.

But the curiosity didn't fade. "That still doesn't explain why she doesn't like me," I said, watching Irene carefully. "It's not just dislike—it's like she feels threatened by me. We just met for goodness sake, I haven't done anything to her."

Irene's lips curved into a smirk again, but this one was sly, almost mischievous. "Oh, I could explain everything you're confused about," she said slowly. "But on one condition."

I arched a brow. “Which is?”

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“You come shopping with me.”

I blinked. “Shopping?”

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“Yes,” she said, leaning forward like it was the most natural thing in the world. “My friend just launched a clothing line in town. We can go there, try on some outfits... you know, pick up a

few nice things.”

The offer sounded harmless enough, but I wasn’t about to throw money at clothes I didn’t need. “I don’t know,” I said, resting my chin on my palm. “Not sure I have the kind of money to spend on clothes right now. And honestly, I’m not exactly in desperate need of a wardrobe update.”

“Oh, please,” Irene groaned. “I’m bored, and I actually want us to bond a little. You don’t have to worry about the money...” She leaned in conspiratorially. “We’ll be burning some little amount from Alex’s credit card.”

That made me pause. A slow grin crept across my face. “And how would Alpha Alexander feel about that?”

“He wouldn’t mind,” she said casually, though there was a glint of amusement in her eyes. “But if we leave without telling him first... he might be a little mad.”

I chuckled. “Say no more. I’m in—if only because it’s going to piss the Alpha off.”

Irene laughed, her eyes lighting up like she’d just won a small victory. “Knew you’d come around.”

We pushed our chairs back almost in unison and made our way out of the dining room, still grinning. There was something oddly easy about bantering with Irene...it felt less like navigating the formalities of an alpha’s household and more like talking to someone who enjoyed a little normal life as much as I did.

As we stepped into the hallway, I could still hear faint footsteps above us—probably Bella heading into Alexander’s room like she’d announced. A small part of me wondered if she’d be watching us leave, mentally filing away my every move like I was some sort of intruder.

Not that it mattered. If she had a problem with me, she could keep it.

My thoughts drifted back to what Irene had said about Bella’s past. I knew what it was like to lose people to violence. Maybe not immediate family members but I’ve been to war, I’ve lost men who were family *to* me. Warriors I grew up with.

Even though I didn’t say it out loud, that tiny flicker of sympathy for Bella refused to go out. Maybe that was why her hostility stung less than it might have otherwise, because deep

down, I understood her need to guard what little stability she had left.

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We reached the front door, and Irene paused to grab her sunglasses from a small table nearby. “You’re going to love this place,” she said, her tone brighter now. “My friend’s designs are gorgeous, and I mean, they make even the plainest person look like they’ve stepped off a runway.” Official source is Find-Novel.net

I gave her a skeptical look. “Are you trying to say I’m plain?”

“Not at all,” she said quickly, though her smirk betrayed her. “I’m saying you’ll look dangerously good in whatever I pick out for you.”

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ALEXANDER

By the time I left the gym, the sun was already high in the sky, pouring in through the glass panels of the corridor.

My muscles ached pleasantly from the morning’s training, sweat still clinging faintly to my skin despite the towel I’d used earlier. I needed to get upstairs, shower, change, and head to

the office.

When I reached my door, I noticed it wasn’t locked. That was odd...I distinctly remembered locking it before leaving earlier. My first thought was that one of the cleaners had come through while I was gone and simply forgotten to lock it afterward. It happened sometimes, and though it was careless, I didn’t feel alarmed.

I stepped inside, tossing my gym bag onto the couch, and headed straight for my closet. But then I froze.

There it was the sound of water running.

I tilted my head toward the bathroom, my brow furrowing. Someone was in there.

“Who’s in there?” I called out, my voice low but sharp.

No answer.

A small flare of irritation sparked in my chest. Perhaps the cleaners had accidentally left the tap *on*. Wasteful and sloppy. I’d have to call the head of staff in and make sure it never happened again.

“I swear, I’m going to call someone out for this carelessness,” I muttered as I walked toward the door, already preparing a lecture in my head.

I pushed the bathroom door open.

And there she was.

Bella.

Standing in my shower...naked.

Her head turned lazily at the sound of the door, her expression annoyingly calm, as though she'd been expecting me. My shock collided with a burst of anger so quickly it made my jaw tighten.

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"What," I bit out, "is the meaning of this?"

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She didn't flinch at my tone. Instead, she casually reached for the shower handle and twisted it off, water dripping down her bare skin as though she was in some cheap, staged scene meant to get a reaction.

"Hand me the towel," she said, like it was the most natural thing in the world.

I grabbed the towel from the rack, tossed it to her, harder than necessary, and turned on my heel. I needed to put space between us. My temper was already straining against its leash.

In the bedroom, I planted myself in front of the dresser, back straight, arms crossed, waiting for her to step out. I didn't have time for this, but I wasn't letting it slide either.

When she emerged, loosely wrapped in the towel, I didn't bother softening my tone.

"Explain. Now. Why are you in my room, in my shower, when I wasn't here? You have your own room, Bella. If, for some reason, yours wasn't available, you could have used Irene's. But mine?" My voice was cold steel. "Absolutely not."

Her lips curved into a slow, knowing smile. "You're overreacting," she purred. "It's not like I haven't showered in your room before."

I narrowed my eyes. "That was years ago. Don't act like it's normal for me to walk in on you naked now. Get dressed and leave."

"It's nothing you haven't seen before, Alex," she said, stepping toward me, her voice dripping with the kind of false confidence that used to work on men who didn't know better. "Don't pretend like you don't miss all... this." Her fingers ghosted over her collarbone as if to draw my attention downward.

I didn't even blink.

The air between us chilled.

"I said," I told her, my voice low and sharp, "get dressed. And leave."

For a split second, something flickered in her eyes...hurt, or maybe disbelief, but it was quickly replaced by a smirk that didn't quite reach her gaze.

"This is because of that thing I met at breakfast, isn't it?" she said, tilting her head, her voice mocking. "The one who called herself Faye." She laughed. "Luna my foot," she added.

Something inside me snapped. For original chapters go to findnovel.net

In two strides I was in front of her, and the towel in her hand was suddenly of no importance

+25 Points/

to me. My wolf surged forward with a flash of possessive rage, and I felt my hands curl into fists before I caught myself.

Every instinct screamed to shut her up, to make her regret even speaking Faye's name that

way.

1

I stopped myself an inch from losing control. My breathing was sharp, my chest rising and falling...I could hear it ring in my ears.

"Watch your mouth," I warned, my voice dangerously low. "When it comes to Faye, you will speak with respect. She is my mate. By that alone, she is your Luna, and you will treat her accordingly."

Bella's eyes widened, just slightly. "Mate? You mean to tell me you almost laid a hand on me because of someone you just met?"

"That 'someone,'" I said, my tone like frost cutting into bone, "is my mate, and any disrespect towards her is an insult to me. Don't test me, Bella."

Her lips pressed into a thin line. For once, she didn't have a comeback ready.

I stepped back, putting space between us again, and turned away. Her scent clung to the room, clashing with the scent of my own space. It was suffocating.

"Get out," I said, my voice final.

She lingered a moment too long, as if still hoping I'd change my mind. But when I didn't even glance at her, she finally moved, the soft pad of her footsteps retreating toward the door.

When it clicked shut behind her, I exhaled slowly, unclenching my fists. My pulse was still running hot, but I wasn't about to let her or anyone else drag me into a situation I couldn't

control.

Adrian stirred inside of me, clearly not happy with how I let Bella off the hook easily. "How dare her?"

I took a deep breath to calm him.

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696

A Warrior's Second Chance

ALEXANDER

+25 Points

I had just stepped out of the shower, still toweling the water from my hair, when my phone rang. Cole's name flashed on the screen. Chapters first released on findnovel.net

I had been expecting his call all morning.

"Cole," I answered, my voice still rough from the steam.

“Alpha, there’s something you need to see,” he said without preamble. No ‘good morning, no small talk. His tone was clipped, carrying the kind of edge that told me whatever it was, I wasn’t going to like it.

“Where are you now?” I asked.

“On my way to the pack house. I’ll be there in less than five minutes.”

“Alright then, go straight to the office,” I told him, tossing the towel aside. “I’ll meet you there.”

“Understood, Alpha.” He hung up.

I stood there for a moment, staring at the phone in my hand. My gut tightened, Cole didn’t rattle easily. Whatever he had to show me was either dangerous, disturbing, or both.

Earlier this morning, I’d sent him with a group of pack soldiers to check the Northern border. We’d lost contact with the wolves stationed there two days ago. No check-ins, no replies on comms. That in itself was odd—wolves didn’t just go silent. If they were injured, they’d send word. If there was trouble, they’d howl for backup. The silence was... wrong.

I dragged on a pair of dark blue jeans and a black shirt, not bothering with formal attire. This wasn’t a meeting with elders or a diplomatic visit—this was something else. I could feel it.

I took the stairs two at a time, my boots thudding against the wood. A few pack members greeted me as I passed, but I barely nodded back. My mind was already racing ahead to the office, to whatever Cole was bringing me.

When I pushed open the heavy doors, Cole was just stepping inside from the other hallway. He shut the door behind us, locking it out of habit. That was never a good sign.

“All right,” I said, heading for my desk. “What have you got?”

He didn’t answer right away. Instead, he pulled his phone from his pocket and tapped the screen. “You need to see this.”

< Chapter 27

26 Points

I stepped around the desk to stand beside him. The first image was of dirt—at least, that’s what it looked like at first glance. But my eyes picked up on the patterns instantly. Paw prints. Wolf prints. Several sets, crossing and overlapping.

“These are from the Northern border?” I asked.

He nodded. “Near the patrol outpost.”

I scanned the image more closely. The tracks were sharp, fresh—meaning they’d been made within the last twenty-four hours. But what was missing was even more telling.

“Where are our guards?” I asked slowly.

“That’s just it,” Cole said, swiping to the next picture. “No one was there, no bodies, no signs of a fight. Just... gone.”

The next photo showed a patch of grass flattened in a circle, as if something, or someone had stood there for a while. My wolf stirred uneasily beneath my skin.

“And this,” Cole added, swiping again.

The image was of a small, metallic object lying in the dirt. It was round, engraved with a design I didn’t recognize at first...until the light caught it in the picture, revealing a stylized wolf’s head with three claw marks slashing across it.

I felt my jaw tighten. “An emblem.”

“That’s what I thought,” Cole said. “Could’ve fallen off someone. Or...”

“Or been left there deliberately,” I finished for him.

“Exactly.”

I leaned against the desk, folding my arms. “You think the border was breached.”

“I think something happened up there, Alpha. And if it was an accident or miscommunication, it wouldn’t look like this.”

My mind went over the possibilities. Rogue wolves? A rival pack? Or... something worse.

“How close were these prints to the boundary line?” I asked.

“Too close,” Cole replied grimly. “And some of them lead past it, into our territory.”

A muscle twitched in my jaw. That was all I needed to hear.

“Who else knows about this?” I asked.

+25 Points

“Just the team I took with me,” he said. “I told them to keep quiet until you decided how to

handle it.”

Good. The last thing we needed was panic spreading through the pack before we even knew what we were dealing with.

I took the phone from him, zooming in on the emblem again. The design didn’t match any of the allied packs I knew. But there was something about the style...sharp lines, bold slashes...that tickled a memory.

“I’ve seen something like this before,” I murmured.

Cole’s eyes sharpened. “Where?”

“Years ago,” I said slowly, “when my father was still Alpha. A group of wolves from beyond the northern mountains came through our territory. They weren’t hostile, but they weren’t exactly friendly either. One of them had a belt buckle with this same mark. My father warned me never to deal with them—they called themselves the Shadow Fang.”

Cole frowned. “Shadow Fang? Never heard of them.”

“You wouldn’t have. They keep to themselves, deep in the highlands. They only come down when they want something. And if they’re leaving calling cards at our border...” I let the thought trail off.

Cole didn’t need me to finish it. “It means they’re back...and they want something.”

“And they’ve taken our guards,” I said flatly.

For a moment, silence stretched between us. My wolf pressed hard against my skin, restless and on edge.

“We’ll need to send the search team,” Cole said finally. “Fast.”

I nodded. “I’ll handpick the members myself. No one inexperienced, and no one who’ll talk.”

Cole gave a short nod of agreement. “When do we move?”

“As soon as I’ve spoken to the council. They’ll want to know, but I’m not telling them everything yet. Just that we have missing patrols and need authorization for a search.”

He studied me for a moment. “You’re thinking this is more than just a breach.”

I met his gaze evenly. “If the Shadow Fang are here, Cole, they’re not here to play games. Last time, they came for trade. This time... I don’t know. But I intend to find out. I hope my instincts

are wrong.”

< Chapter 27

\$25 Points

I handed his phone back and walked to the window, looking out over the training grounds. Wolves were sparring in the sun, their laughter carrying faintly through the glass. They had no idea their world might be about to shift. And it’s my duty to protect them.

“They’ll try to hit us where it hurts,” I said quietly. “The border was just the first move.”

Cole moved to stand beside me. “Then we make sure it’s their last.”

I glanced at him, a faint smile tugging at my mouth. That was why he was my beta...steady, reliable, and ready for a fight.

“Get the warriors ready,” I said. “And keep this quiet until I give the order. If anyone asks, the patrols are on a training rotation.”

“Understood.” He turned to go, but paused at the door. “Alpha Alexander... if they’ve taken our wolves alive, do you think...”

“They’ll use them,” I said bluntly. “For leverage, for information. And if we’re too slow, we won’t get them back.”

His jaw tightened, but he nodded once and left.

When the door shut, I exhaled slowly. My father’s voice echoed in my head from years ago, warning me about the Shadow Fang. They’re not allies, Alexander. They’re opportunists, they’ll smile while they sharpen the knife.

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A Warrior's Second Chance

I hadn't realized until late in the afternoon that I hadn't seen my sister Irene, or my mate, Faye all day.

It struck me in that quiet, almost unsettling way you notice something is missing from the rhythm of the day.

Breakfast had been easy to skip, as usual. I wasn't much of a morning eater, and lately, the meetings and patrol reports had been enough to drag me away from anything resembling a normal routine... however, I made an exception for the gym today. But skipping breakfast also meant I'd missed that window to check in on both of them.

In normal times, I might not have given it much thought. Irene had always been independent, sometimes too much for her own good. Faye was still settling into the role of Luna, learning our customs, and adjusting to me—not the easiest process for either of us. But these weren't normal times.

The air in the territory is tense and thick with the kind of quiet unrest that made even the most routine of movements feel heavier.

We had suspicions of a breach in our borders. It wasn't confirmed yet, but my gut told me we weren't being paranoid. And when there's the possibility of danger, you don't let the people you care about out of your sight, not for long.

I didn't notice when Cole entered the office. "Is everything alright, Alpha"

I pulled out my phone, scrolling straight to Irene's name. "Nothing, I just remembered I haven't seen my sister or the Luna today. I need them to stay where I can see them."

As I dialed Irene's number, I expected her to answer quickly as she usually did when I called, but this time, it rang until her voicemail picked up.

"Answer your damn phone, Irene," I muttered under my breath, ending the call. Chapters first released on Find_Novel(.)net

Cole sighed, leaning against the desk like he had all the time in the world. "Try Luna Faye," he suggested, his tone casual but his eyes watching me closely. "If they're together, maybe they're in either Irene's chamber or Luna Faye's."

I nodded, half-reaching for my phone again before realizing something ridiculous. “I don’t even have Faye’s number,” I admitted, the words tasting absurd even as I said them.

Cole raised his brows and gave me one of those looks that didn’t need words...a judgmental, ‘Are you serious right now?’ look.

<Chapter 28

+25 Points

I knew exactly what he was thinking: She’s your mate, and you don’t even have her number?

I ignored the jab, pretending it rolled off me. “Forget it,” I said. “Just go find them. Tell them I want to see them in the office now.”

Cole pushed off from the desk with a shrug. “Alright. I’ll check both chambers first.”

The door had barely closed behind him before I started pacing. I told myself it was just precaution, no reason to think the worst. But my instincts were restless. In my experience, instincts were rarely wrong.

“I just hope they’re within the pack house,” I said to myself.

I kept replaying possible scenarios in my head. Irene was the wilder of the two, more likely to drag someone into a spur-of-the-moment decision without thinking it through. If she’d decided to “show Faye around” somewhere outside the safety of the territory, it would be just like her to forget or ignore that she was supposed to tell me first.

And Faye... I clenched my jaw. She was new, yes, but she wasn’t naïve. She had to have picked up by now that leaving without letting me know was unacceptable...especially when she was Luna. Her movements weren’t just about her anymore; they had implications for the entire pack.

The minutes dragged until Cole came back in. He had a strange look on his face, like he’d rather keep his mouth shut than actually explain what he’d found.

“Well?” I asked, sharper than I intended.

“They’re not in either chamber,” he said slowly. “And... someone mentioned they saw them drive out earlier in Irene’s car.”

The words landed like a spark in dry grass...instant fire.

“You’ve got to be kidding me,” I snapped. “She knows she’s not supposed to leave the walls without telling me. And Faye...what the hell was she thinking going along with it?”

Cole didn't flinch at my tone. He'd been on the receiving end of my temper more than once and had learned not to take it personally. "We'll find them. I'll have someone start tracking the car's location. I can go after them myself."

"That's not the point," I said, pacing again. "They had to pick today to pull something like this? Today, when we have every reason to believe someone might be watching our movements? They might not know the full extent of what's going on, but that doesn't make it any less

reckless."

"They probably didn't mean any harm," Cole said, already pulling out his phone to make the

< Chapter 28

call

"Intent doesn't matter if they end up walking into danger," I shot back.

+79 Points P

He didn't argue, just murmured instructions into the phone, ordering a location trace on Irene's car. I stood there, every muscle in my body wound tight. I didn't like the idea of them being out there without backup, without even a damn text to tell me where they were going.

Then Cole's tone shifted mid-conversation. "Oh. That's okay," he said abruptly, ending the call.

"What?" I demanded.

"They just drove back into the pack house," he said, slipping his phone back into his *pocket*.

Relief hit me first...sharp and immediate...but it was quickly replaced by irritation. They were back, which meant they were about to hear exactly what I thought of this little excursion.

Cole glanced at me. "You still want me to call them in?"

"Absolutely," I said without hesitation.

As he turned to leave again, I stood behind my desk, gripping the edge of it. Part of me wanted to let the anger burn itself out before they arrived.

But the other part...the Alpha in me...knew that this wasn't just about my personal feelings. It was about discipline, about making sure they understood that these boundaries weren't optional.

I wasn't just their brother or mate. I was responsible for the safety of this pack, and that meant I couldn't afford to let things slide. Not even once. Such reckless behavior is unacceptable especially from them.

3

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A Warrior's Second Chance

FAYE

I could tell the moment Irene and I stepped into Alexander's office that we were in trouble. Of course the plan was to make him mad, but not this level of mad.

I know it sounds childish, but the only way I can handle coexisting with him is by making him see that he can't control me. But I knew this was about to backfire.

He was behind his desk, shoulders squared, jaw tight, eyes locked on us in that way that made the air in the room feel heavier. His hands were flat on the desk, as though he was trying to anchor himself in place so he didn't leap across it and throttle us both.

It's not that serious for goodness sake.

The door clicked shut behind us. The sound was far too loud for my liking.

Irene walked in like she didn't notice, or maybe didn't care that the Alpha of the Blood Crescent Pack looked ready to explode. She even sat down with a small, polite smile. I followed her lead, but my stomach was a knot.

As we settled into the chairs opposite him, Irene leaned slightly toward me, her voice barely a whisper.

"He's mad," she murmured, her lips twitching like she was suppressing a grin.

"Stop it," I said quietly. I had to bite the inside of my cheek to stop my own laugh. Great. Exactly the kind of attitude that would keep this meeting short... and by short, I meant ending

with the both of us storming out.

Alexander took a slow, deliberate breath, the kind you take when you're clinging to your temper by the thinnest thread. His eyes flicked between us, cold and assessing like he was about to scold some teenagers.

"What," he began, each word clipped, "were the two of you thinking...going out without telling

me?"

I straightened slightly, opening my mouth to explain...well, maybe not explain so much as defend...but he lifted a hand, palm out, cutting me off before I could get a single word out.

That little gesture burned more than I wanted to admit. My mouth snapped shut, but something inside me tightened. He didn't even want to hear me out? Not even a token attempt at letting me speak? That was disrespectful to me, but I forced my expression to be neutral and swallowed the sting. Fine.

His gaze shifted to Irene like I wasn't even in the room.

+25 Points

“Faye is new here,” he said, voice lower now but still sharp enough to cut, “and she doesn’t understand certain things about our pack yet. I can understand that. But you, Irene...” His tone hardened. “You should know better. Leaving the pack house without telling me or taking precautions is reckless. We have enemies, and you know that.”

Irene blinked, caught off guard for maybe half a second before her eyebrows rose.

“Enemies?” she repeated. “You’re acting like I went out in the middle of a war. Alex, there hasn’t been a single serious security issue in Blood Crescent territory for years–years–even before Father died. What exactly are you so worried about?”

Her casual tone was like tossing oil onto an open flame. I watched Alexander’s nostrils flare just slightly, his grip on his desk tightening, still, he didn’t raise his voice. He ran a hand through his hair.

He leaned back in his chair. “Listen to me, Irene...whether or not there’s a threat right now isn’t the point. The point is, I want to know where you are at all times. If you don’t want to tell me directly, fine, tell someone. Or take a bodyguard with you.”

His voice was even, but there was an edge of steel under it that made the room feel smaller. I wonder if there’s something else behind his paranoia, because it didn’t seem normal.

I sat there, silent, weighing my options. Part of me wanted to stand up and leave—make it clear I didn’t appreciate being dismissed earlier. But that would have been a spectacularly bad move.

He wasn’t just my mate, he was the Alpha, and I was in his pack house. If my mother had taught me anything, it was to hold your tongue until you could speak without making a fool of yourself.

Irene gave a soft scoff. “I’m a wolf, Alex. You expect me to walk around with a bodyguard every time I leave the house?” She gestured vaguely toward the door. “Like some fragile
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human who can’t cross the street alone?”

“That’s not what I mean, Alexander replied, calm. “I’m not going to insist on the bodyguard if you hate the idea so much. But you will inform me before you go anywhere henceforth. That is not up for debate.”

His words landed like stones.

Irene tilted her head, one brow arching in challenge. “And if I don’t?”

His eyes darkened just slightly, the faintest sign of the Alpha pushing to the surface. “I wasn’t

asking, that's an order."

23 points

Irene's lips pressed into a line. For once, she seemed to realize this wasn't a game she could win by being clever. After a moment, she sighed, throwing up her hands.

"Fine. If it'll help you sleep better at night, I'll let you know."

Alexander didn't look relieved, but frustrated, like this whole thing was beneath him but he couldn't let it go. His jaw worked for a moment before he finally said, "Good."

The tension in the room didn't ease, but at least it didn't get worse.

Irene leaned back, her posture all nonchalance again. "Is that all?"

"Yes," Alexander said after a pause. "You can go."

She stood, brushing invisible lint from her clothes. I got to my feet as well, ready to escape this suffocating room, but before I could take a single step, his voice stopped me.

“Not you, Faye.”

The words froze me in place.

2

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696

A Warrior's Second Chance

I was still standing there after Irene left, the faint echo of the door clicking shut behind her like a small exclamation mark at the end of a sentence I didn't get to finish.

My palms itched to be doing something...anything, other than hanging at my sides while Alexander stared at me.

He rose from his chair with that unhurried grace of his, the kind that made you second-guess whether he was calm or just winding up for something you'd regret.

"I need to have a chat with you," he said.

I found my eyes tracking the way he moved—measured steps, deliberate. And then he came around the desk, each step shrinking the space between us until I could hear the soft scuff of

his boots on the floor.

I told myself not to notice what he was wearing. That was a mistake.

Dark blue jeans, perfectly fitted, a black shirt that hugged his shoulders in a way I had no business staring at. I'd seen him in plenty of formal and corporate wears, but this... this was different. Unpolished, almost casual, but somehow it made him look even more dangerous, more... real. And maybe that was what made it worse.

I mentally slapped myself and tried to get my thoughts back in order. This was not the time to start noticing how good my mate looked.

Not when he was clearly still angry. Not when I was still smarting from being shut down in front of Irene like my opinion was irrelevant, and especially not when this arrangement of ours was supposed to be strictly business.

“Get it together, Faye,” I said to myself.

He stopped just inches from me. “What?” he asked, raising an eyebrow. Did he hear me?

“I... wasn’t talking *to you*.” Great, Faye. Now you’re stammering.

Alexander was close enough that his scent wrapped around me like a net I hadn’t agreed to be caught in. I forced my chin up, matching his gaze.

That cold, unreadable stare, those pale gray eyes. I’d seen them soften before, once or twice, but never when he was in Alpha mode. Right now, they were cold, like standing in front of a closed door I didn’t have the key for.

“Do you know why I asked *you* to stay behind?” he asked finally, his voice low.

I arched a brow. “I don’t know... maybe because you were saving the best for last? So you could take your time putting me in my place? That seems to satisfy you a lot.”

His expression didn't change, but something flickered in his eyes, quick, like the shadow of a bird passing overhead.

"Why do you always think I enjoy putting you down?" he asked, and for the first time, there was something in his tone that wasn't just cold authority. There was almost... a question. Like he genuinely didn't understand why I'd think that. Really?

I might have answered, but my focus kept slipping. It wasn't normal—being this aware of someone you were mad at. My body seemed to have skipped the memo that I was supposed to be annoyed with him. I blamed the stupid mate bond. And his scent... Definitely his scent.

I gave my head a tiny shake, pulling myself together. "Why did you ask me to stay, then?"

His jaw tightened slightly. "Because I didn't want Irene interfering in what I'm about to say," he said. "Faye, you're supposed to be the Luna of this pack. But you're not acting like one. Leaving the pack house without telling me—your mate and Alpha—no matter the reason, even if it was an emergency, is disrespectful. And it's wrong on your part."

I let out a short, laugh. "Oh, so now I'm the Luna? Interesting. Because from where I'm standing, you treat me like a temporary guest in your house who's inconveniencing you." Check latest chapters at findnovel.net

That made him pause. I could see it...the way his shoulders stiffened just slightly, the way he didn't rush to reply.

“If you really want me to behave like the Luna,” I went on, heat creeping into my voice, “maybe start by treating me like one. With respect. Instead of ignoring me altogether like you have been doing since I set foot in Blood Crescent.”

He studied me for a moment, and I hated that I couldn’t tell what he was thinking. Then he said, “I’m not going to argue with you about this. But hear me clearly...henceforth, you are not to step out of the pack house alone. You will take a warrior with you.”

Now I could tell there was something he wasn’t saying.

I took a slow step forward, closing what little space remained between us until I could see the faint golden ring around his irises, the way the muscle in his jaw flexed. “What’s really going on, Alexander?” I asked quietly. “You’re not just this worried for nothing. Something’s happening. Something that makes *you* think the territory isn’t safe.”

He looked... surprised. Not by much, but enough for me to notice. Like he hadn’t expected me to put the pieces together.

His lips pressed into a thin line before he turned away, walking back toward his desk. “That’s not your concern,” he said without looking at me. “You have no business dealing with security threats, if any. All I’m asking is that you don’t make things worse by making yourself

bait.”

I couldn't help it, I laughed. It wasn't a nice laugh, either. "Bait? Are *you* serious?"

He glanced at me over his shoulder, clearly not appreciating the humor. "Is something funny?" He asked.

"Perhaps you need a reintroduction to the wolf you're mated *to*," I said, stepping forward again, my voice sharper now. "I don't need a warrior to protect me. I am a warrior, Alexander. I was the Delta of Silver Hollow for years before you and I had the mating ceremony."

This time, his eyes flickered in something that could have been surprise. Or maybe grudging respect, but I wasn't foolish enough to think it would change his mind.

"You already knew that, didn't you?" I said, my voice cooling. "You just don't think it matters, because you don't take me seriously."

He didn't deny it, didn't confirm it either. He simply looked at me for a long moment, then said, "We're done here."

For the second time today, he shut me down without so much as a discussion. I could feel the retort bubbling up, the sharp words that wanted to leap off my tongue, but I swallowed

them.

Instead, I turned and walked straight to the door. I didn't look back as I opened it and left his office, though I could feel his gaze on me until the door clicked shut between us.