



Chapter 30



Thalia's POV

One year later, and I barely recognize my life.

The house we built sits on pack lands—sprawling and modern, large enough for three growing children who destroy everything they touch. Custom-built for chaos, Kieran said when he showed me the plans. Built for family.

I'm established as Luna now. The white wolf no longer a novelty whispered about in corridors but a symbol of strength. The wolfless shame who became something no one expected.

The pack thrives under our joint leadership. Old hierarchies dismantled, new structures that value ability over birthright. Cubs like Phoenix get specialized training instead of punishment for their power. Lower-ranked wolves hold positions once reserved for Alpha families. The council that fought me a year ago now implements my proposals before I ask.

It's Tuesday evening and I'm attempting to cook dinner while managing controlled chaos. Orion's explaining his advanced physics project at the kitchen table, something about quantum mechanics that's definitely above his grade level but he understands it anyway.

"So if we consider the wave-particle duality," he says, adjusting glasses he doesn't actually need but thinks make him look smarter, "then theoretically—"

"Orion, set the table," I interrupt gently. "Physics can wait until after dinner."

He sighs but complies, still muttering about particles.

Luna's in the living room mediating a fight between two younger pack cubs who came for a playdate. Eight years old and already displaying empathic abilities that let her feel exactly what they're feeling, talk them down from tantrums with ease most adults can't manage.

"You're angry because he broke your toy," she says calmly to one sobbing six-year-old. "And you're scared because you didn't mean to and don't want to get in trouble," to the other. "So let's fix this together."

I watch her work with something like awe. My daughter, who inherited my capacity for empathy but Kieran's confidence to actually use it.

Phoenix practices controlled strength exercises in the backyard—Kieran designed them specifically for her after she accidentally broke three training dummies in one week. Controlled being relative. Through the window, I watch her hold a chair above her head with one hand, trying to keep it steady while counting to sixty.

The front door opens. Kieran's home.

"DAD!" Phoenix drops the chair—thankfully on grass—and launches herself through the back door. Pure joy and Alpha strength that would fell a normal man.

He catches her laughing, lifts all three kids simultaneously when Orion and Luna rush to join. They scream with delight as he spins them, and something in my chest cracks open with happiness.

This is what home looks like. Not the house, not the pack lands. This. Him with our children, all of us together, the family I never thought I'd have.

The doorbell rings. Rosalie, right on time.

"I brought wine and gossip," she announces, sweeping in with bags.
"Also, your daughter texted me earlier asking if I could explain
menstrual cycles because apparently you haven't had that talk yet."

"She's eight!"

"And precocious. We had a very educational conversation about
puberty." Rosalie grins. "You're welcome."

She's family now. Honorary aunt who knows everything—the truth
about the heat night, the years of running, the mate bond that chose
Kieran—and loves us anyway. Helped me hide when hiding was survival.
Celebrates with me now that surviving has become living.

Over dinner, she regales us with stories about her new girlfriend. "She's
delightfully dramatic. Yesterday she cried because the sunset was too
beautiful. I'm completely in love."

The kids ask if they can meet her. Rosalie promises soon.

After dinner, they drag Kieran away to show him something urgent. "It's
important, Dad," Phoenix insists. "Life or death important."

It's a bug she found. Apparently life or death urgent means a beetle
that's kind of pretty.

Rosalie and I clean up in the kitchen, comfortable silence that comes
from years of friendship.

"You look happy," she observes, drying a plate. "Actually happy, not just
surviving."

The words hit me sideways. I pause, really consider them.

"I am," I realize. "For the first time in my life, I'm not running, not
hiding, not just enduring." My voice catches. "I'm living."

Rosalie's eyes go soft. "You deserve this. All of it. The family, the pack, the happy ending you fought like hell to get."

"It doesn't feel like an ending. Feels like finally starting."

"Even better."

After she leaves and the kids finally crash—overtired and overexcited from the playdate—Kieran and I stand in our bedroom. Our sanctuary. The one space that's just ours.

The mate mark on my throat catches lamplight. Permanent claim, visible proof that I belong to him as much as he belongs to me.

"You know what today is?" he asks, pulling me close.

I do. The date is seared into my memory. "Eight years since I ran pregnant and terrified through the forest."

His arms tighten around me. "Eight years since I started searching for you. Every day for eight years, I looked. Hired investigators, tracked leads, hoped." His voice roughens. "Took us a while, but you found your way home."

Home. The word used to mean escape. Now it means this—him, them, us.

I look up at him. My mate. My Alpha. The father of my impossible children. The man who went from my destroyer to my everything, and somehow both versions shaped who I became.

"You were always supposed to be here," he murmurs, hand sliding up to cup my face. "With me. With them. Leading the pack. Being exactly who you were meant to be."

Through the window, my reflection looks back. The white wolf that

shouldn't exist. The Luna who rose from nothing.

Strong. Whole. Chosen.

The broken girl who ran is gone, replaced by the woman who built everything from ashes. Who proved everyone wrong. Who survived eight years alone and came back powerful enough to lead. Who claimed her destiny even when destiny claimed her first.

"I used to be terrified of this," I admit quietly. "Of the bond, of being claimed, of losing myself in someone else."

"And now?" His thumb traces my lower lip.

"Now I know the bond didn't steal my choice. It showed me who to choose. The rest was all me." I smile. "Choosing to accept it. Choosing to build this life. Choosing you every day."

The mate bond hums satisfied between us, no longer the shocking new thing but comfortable certainty. Home in a person.

"Forever," I whisper, the word that used to terrify me now feeling like promise.

Kieran kisses me—deep and claiming, possessive and tender, everything we are compressed into contact. "Forever isn't long enough."

The mate mark pulses. Our children sleep down the hall. The pack we lead together sprawls across territories we protect. The life we built from wreckage and second chances fills every corner of this house.

Eight years ago, I ran pregnant and alone into darkness, terrified of everything.

Now I stand in light, surrounded by family, leading a pack that respects instead of breaks me.

Now I stand in light, surrounded by family, leading a pack that respects instead of breaks me.

The white Luna. The impossible mother. The woman who survived.

Forever isn't long enough for this happiness.

But I'll take every second I'm given.

End of *The* Chapter

Chapter 30



Comments

53



Gifts

51