

# A Broken Alpha Heiress' Revenge

[ 862 words ]

Chapter 101

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Finished

Third Person's POV

Lucien held Riley close as they stepped out of Moonthread Den, only to find Ronan still standing nearby.

A flicker of annoyance passed through Lucien's eyes. He wrapped his coat tighter around Riley, shielding her face completely from view.

Riley's heartbeat thundered in her chest. She clutched the edge of his coat with white knuckles, her nails digging into her palms.

"Alpha Lucien," Ronan called out, stepping forward with an air of forced politeness. "Leaving so soon?"

Lucien didn't hesitate. His voice was steady, commanding. "My mate isn't feeling well."

At those words, Riley's heart skipped a beat. The title rolled off his tongue so naturally, yet it sent a tremor through her soul. Her face burned as she pressed closer to Lucien, her ear against his chest, where his heartbeat matched her own—fast, strong, and protective.

The tension was palpable. Even the air seemed to thicken with the weight of dominance and threat.

Lucien narrowed his eyes, a dangerous glint flickering in their amber depths. "She's not in a condition to greet anyone, especially not you."

With that, he effortlessly scooped Riley up into his arms.

Startled, she instinctively wrapped her arms around his neck, burying her face in his shoulder.

Lucien opened the car door in a swift motion and gently placed her in the back seat, his frame hovering protectively above her.

Their breaths mingled in the narrow space between them. Riley could feel his warmth against her skin, his scent grounding her.

He lowered his head slightly and murmured near her ear. "Don't be afraid. I'm here."

His voice, soft and resolute, soothed the turmoil inside her.

Then he stood, closed the door, and turned to face Ronan.

The air shifted.

Ronan took a step closer, a gleam of suspicion in his eyes. He couldn't see the woman's face clearly, but something about her scent tickled his memory.

Lucien's stance stiffened. His posture was no longer just defensive. It was territorial.

"If there's nothing else, I'll be going," Lucien said, his tone now unmistakably frigid.

Ronan hesitated.

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Chapter 101

There was something nagging at him. A scent—familiar, almost maddeningly so.

He inhaled again.

The scent was buried beneath layers of Lucien's Alpha pheromones, but still faintly there. Riley.

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But... no. That couldn't be. Riley had been scrawny, hollow-eyed, with bruises under her skin and despair in her bones.

Yet the woman Lucien shielded was nothing like the ghost of the prisoner he remembered.

This one was fuller now, curves soft and healthy under the folds of Lucien's coat. Her once dull skin now glowed with quiet vitality. Even the air around her shimmered with new strength, the kind that came from being cared for—not pitied, but protected. Loved.

Lucien had given her that. And Ronan didn't recognize what he'd once broken because she was no longer

broken.

But instincts were instincts.

Ronan moved.

With a sudden motion, he yanked open the car door.

A cold gust swept inside.

Riley flinched, shrinking back.

Ronan leaned in, eyes seeking her face-

But he never got the chance.

Lucien's fist collided with Ronan's jaw, sending the other Alpha stumbling back several steps.

Ronan wiped the blood from his lip, stunned. He was rarely touched—and

Fury overtook him.

ever like this, not in public.

He lunged.

The sound of fabric tearing echoed through the street as both men began to shift.

Bones cracked. Muscles contorted. Flesh tore as fur erupted from skin.

Lucien's form expanded—sleek midnight fur, like woven obsidian under sunlight. He was bigger than Ronan remembered, more solid, with a terrifying, quiet strength. His eyes blazed with golden fury.

Ronan's wolf emerged seconds later, larger in height perhaps, with a brutish, bulkier frame and a coat of storm-gray. But size alone meant nothing.

Lucien moved like a shadow come alive. Precise. Lethal.

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Chapter 101

They collided with a snarl.

Claws slashed. Fangs snapped.

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The street became a battlefield.

Riley sat frozen in the car, both hands clenched to the door frame as the two Alphas fought like ancient titans.

Each time Lucien was hit, her heart stopped. Every blow landed on him felt like it landed on her.

She could hardly breathe.

None of this would have happened if not for her.

Lucien-

The man who had treated her not as a burden, but as a person.

He had apologized the moment she coughed from the smoke in his study and never smoked near her again.

When she'd tried to take her own life, he'd stopped her. When she was half-dead from alcohol poisoning, he rushed her to the infirmary and paid her medical fees without question.

He never asked anything of her in return. Not even gratitude.

Why?

Because Lucien wasn't like Ronan. He wasn't a monster with a charming smile. He was good. And he was being punished because of her.

Tears burned in her eyes.

Ronan had ruined her once before. In prison, he'd sent wolves to "discipline" her.

For years, even the sound of his name triggered tremors in her chest. The scent of his cologne made her flinch. His voice could shatter her from the inside out.

But not now.

Not anymore.

Something shifted inside her—something fierce and primal and unbreakable.

Lucien's kindness had done what therapy and time could not: it had made her feel safe again.

Not weak. Not broken.

She wasn't the helpless girl Ronan had locked away.

She was Riley.

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Chapter 101

A survivor. A white wolf.

She clenched her fists, nails drawing blood.

And this time, she wouldn't let him win.

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[ 868 words ]

Chapter 102

Riley's POV

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A sharp crack rang out as Lucien slammed Ronan into the pavement, claws sinking deep into his opponent's shoulder. But Ronan's brute strength allowed him to twist free, retaliating with a vicious swipe that tore through Lucien's side.

I gasped, watching blood stain Lucien's obsidian fur.

No more.

Lucien was fighting for me.

And I—I was just watching.

Frozen.

Again.

Like I had been in that cell. Like I had been when they dragged me through those corridors, chained and bleeding, for "discipline." Like I had been when Ronan watched it all with that twisted little smile and did nothing.

No. Not again.

I couldn't lose Lucien. Not him. Not the only one who ever looked at me and saw more than damage.

A heat surged through me so suddenly I could barely gasp. It spread like fire through my limbs, my chest, my skull. I dropped to my knees.

Nyra controls.

I couldn't breathe..

The world exploded in light.

Paws.

I looked down.

White.

And I was angry.

Ronan didn't even see me coming..

I launched from behind, my jaws unhinging with a sound that didn't belong in this world. I sank my fangs into the thick muscle of his throat, right where wolf met man. His blood gushed hot against my tongue, but I didn't let go.

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He roared—more from shock than pain—and I bit down harder.

Then I threw him.

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I don't know where the strength came from. All I knew was I needed him away from Lucien. Away from me.

Ronan's body sailed through the air like a broken doll and crashed headfirst into a jagged stone. The impact echoed like thunder. His body twitched... then went still.

His wolf form shimmered, collapsed in on itself, and left behind his human body—naked, bruised, unconscious.

Unmoving.

I shifted back.

The transformation left me breathless. I collapsed to the pavement, gasping, shaking, my skin still tingling from the white wolf's rage.

I stared at Ronan's body. At the blood pooling beneath his head. At his too-still chest.

"No..." My voice came out broken. "No, no, no—what have I done?"

I pulled my knees to my chest, curling into myself. "I didn't mean to- I didn't want-"

They're going to send me back.

That was my first thought. My only thought.

Back to the prison. Back to the chains. Back to being nothing but a file and a cage.

I was shaking so badly I didn't even feel Lucien until his coat was around my shoulders and his arms were around me.

"I didn't mean to," I whispered again, because maybe if I said it enough, the moon would hear me. Maybe the gods would believe me.

"Riley," Lucien said, his voice low, firm, like a hand on my spine. "Breathe."

I couldn't.

"I think I killed him," I choked. "Lucien, I killed someone—he's going to die because of me-"

"No, he's not."

His hand cradled the back of my head, tucking me into his chest. He smelled like blood and ash and the forest in autumn. He felt like safety.

"You did what you had to do. He came for you. And you stopped him."

"But I wasn't supposed to fight like that—I wasn't supposed to be like that. I—what if they see me as a threat? What if-"

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## Chapter 102

“I’ll protect you,” he interrupted, without hesitation. “Always.”

I didn’t want to believe him.

But I did.

Because he had never once broken a promise to me.

His voice deepened in that strange, silent way I was still getting used to. A mind–link.

“Duke. Now. Bring a medic. Quietly.”

I heard the answer ripple back in his mind, clear and obedient.

Lucien stayed with me. Didn’t move. Didn’t flinch. Just held me as if I wasn’t a killer. As if I was still someone worth saving.

Finished

A few minutes later, Duke arrived with a healer. I didn’t look up—I didn’t want to see anyone’s judgment.

But the healer knelt beside Ronan and checked his pulse.

“He’s alive,” she said. “Barely. But he is.”

I exhaled so sharply I almost passed out.

She touched his neck, frowning. “His wolf isn’t healing the wound. The bite’s too deep. He’s been marked by a White Wolf. That kind of wound... his body won’t regenerate on its own.”

“What does that mean?” I asked, my voice so small.

She glanced up at Lucien. “It means he’ll live. But not without help. We’ll need to get him to Mooncrest’s. primary pack hospital. Now.”

Duke nodded and called in the transport.

They loaded Ronan up and drove him away, unconscious and bleeding.

Still alive.

I was still staring at the space where his body had been when Lucien crouched beside me again.

“You did well,” he said.

I blinked at him. “What?”

“You fought back. And you won.” His hand found mine, firm and warm. “You’re strong, Riley. Stronger than any of them thought. Stronger than they wanted you to be.”

“But I hurt him.”

“He was going to hurt you. Again. Don’t you see?” He leaned closer, his forehead brushing mine. “Anyone who tries to harm you is my enemy. And now, yours too.”

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Chapter 102

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Finished

I swallowed the lump in my throat. “They’ll hate me.”

“Then let them hate you from under your feet,” he growled softly. “Because you are a white wolf, Riley. You are rare. You are powerful. And from now on...”

His eyes burned with gold.

“...anyone who dares to hurt you will answer to us.”

And for the first time in years, I believed it.

I wasn’t weak anymore.

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[ 912 words ]

## Chapter 103

### Third Person's POV

The walls of the hospital room felt like they were closing in.

Ronan Duskcliff sat alone in the dim light, motionless except for the rhythmic tightening of his jaw. His body bore the marks of the battle—bruises along his ribs, torn muscle along his collarbone, and the bandages wrapped tightly around his throat, still seeping the faintest traces of blood.

But it was not pain that consumed him.

It was the rage.

He glanced down at the money still scattered across his bed. Neatly stacked bills. Ten thick bundles. Ten thousand credits. Tossed onto his hospital sheets like a tip for a street performer.

The message had been clear: You're worth this much. No more.

Delivered by Duke, Lucien Duskgrave's smug and ever-loyal Beta. The bastard hadn't even looked nervous walking into the room, despite knowing he was facing an Alpha who'd just been humiliated in public.

"Medical expenses," Duke had said with mock sympathy. "Our Alpha wanted to be generous."

And the worst part? Duke hadn't even said Lucien's name. Just our Alpha—as if Ronan wasn't one.

Ronan let out a low growl, claws threatening to extend from his fingers before he forced them back with effort. Losing control now would only add to his shame.

No—he needed clarity. He needed answers.

Because it wasn't just the money.

It wasn't just Lucien's punch to the jaw.

It was what happened next.

He closed his eyes, trying to recall every second. The street outside Moonthread Den. The way Lucien had stood over the she-wolf in his arms, shielding her face, his pheromones flooding the air like a wall of fire. Ronan hadn't seen her—could barely scent her—but something about the situation had prickled at the back of his mind.

So he'd opened the car door. Just a look. Just a glimpse. Just enough to satisfy the question clawing at him.

And then—darkness.

Something had struck him from behind like a boulder hurled by a god.

The impact had shattered his awareness in an instant, knocking the air from his lungs. He didn't even have time to shift fully before jaws closed around his throat—not Lucien's. No. This scent had been foreign. Strange. Ancient.

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His wolf had screamed. Not in anger, but in fear.

A white wolf.

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The image haunted him—moonlight—bright fur streaking past his vision, fangs stained red, a raw power that didn't belong to any Pack he knew. She hadn't just attacked him—she'd dominated him.

And then she was gone.

Ronan had once vaguely heard Scarlett mention that Riley was a white wolf, but her wolf spirit was incomplete. So he didn't connect the powerful, muscular white wolf that defeated him with Riley.

When he came to, Lucien was standing between them, golden eyes alight with possessive rage, body taut like a drawn bowstring, one hand on the she-wolf's back, the other held out like a warning to stay away.

That wasn't the posture of a Pack Alpha protecting a subordinate.

That was the posture of a male standing over his mate.

Ronan inhaled sharply. The truth began to click together like steel teeth of a trap.

A white wolf.

In Mooncrest territory.

Protected—claimed—by Lucien Duskgrave.

Ronan had heard whispers, long ago. Folktales passed between elders when the moons were full. White wolves were said to be celestial—born. Wolves of prophecy. Wolves of ruin. Most believed they had all died out. Some said they'd never existed at all.

But now?

Now, one had bitten him. And left a wound his wolf couldn't heal.

The shame would have been enough to crush a lesser Alpha.

But Ronan... Ronan wasn't just angry.

He was intrigued.

He stood up slowly, limbs aching, head still pounding. His body was bruised—but his mind was sharp. Cold. Focused like a blade honed in silence.

Lucien had a secret.

A dangerous one.

And in the game of territory, secrets were weapons.

He reached toward the nightstand, grabbing his phone with bloodied fingers. The screen flickered to life, casting a pale glow over his face. He scrolled until he found the number, and pressed dial.

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## Chapter 103

The line connected almost immediately.

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“Alpha,” came the voice on the other end—crisp, efficient. His Beta. Loyal. Quiet. Deadly when required.

“I need eyes,” Ronan said, his voice hoarse from the wound but firm as stone. “There was a white wolf at Moonthread Den. Female. Fast, strong, unregistered.”

There was a pause. “A white wolf?”

“You heard me.”

“I didn’t think they-”

“I don’t care what you thought. I was bitten. Deep. I still can’t shift. That means this isn’t a rogue. It’s something else. Something powerful.”

His Beta’s tone shifted. “You think Lucien’s protecting her?”

“I know he is.” Ronan’s eyes narrowed, pacing to the window. “I want her identity. Her origin. Who she’s bonded to. Any rumors, rogue sightings, rogue rescues, any sealed records. I don’t care if it’s from the Pack archives or the old prisons. She wasn’t on the Council register. That means someone’s hiding her.”

“And the official route?”

“No.” Ronan’s voice cut through the line like a whip. “No Pack Elders. No bureaucrats. This stays off the grid. Use back channels. Pay whoever needs paying. I want to know who she is—and why Lucien would risk his throne to keep her hidden.”

His Beta didn’t hesitate. “Understood. I’ll begin tonight.”

Ronan ended the call and tossed the phone onto the bed.

The wind howled outside the window, brushing against the glass like claws against bone.

He stared at his reflection in the pane—bloodied, half-dressed, humiliated... but not broken.

“Enjoy your illusion of victory, Duskgrave,” he murmured, his voice nearly a growl.  
“Because once I uncover what you’re hiding...”

His eyes glinted with cold satisfaction.

“I’ll burn your kingdom from the inside out.”

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[ 784 words ]

Chapter 104

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Ronan Duskcliff sat on the edge of his hospital bed, his bandaged head still throbbing. But the physical pain couldn’t compete with what haunted him more deeply—Riley.

It had been four, maybe five days since she vanished without a trace.

No updates. No whispers. No leads.

She had no money. No Pack. No allies.

She’d disappeared wearing tattered clothes and carrying fresh wounds—some he’d inflicted himself. The image of her bleeding and barely able to stand kept clawing at his mind.

Where could she have gone?

Where would a wolf like that hide?

Frustrated, Ronan reached for his phone and dialed Kael Vale's number. It rang once. Then twice.

No answer.

He called again. And again.

Each time, the silence on the other end only sharpened his anxiety into a blade.

"That bastard..." Ronan growled and slammed the phone down on the bedside table. "What the hell is he doing?"

Miles away, within the crumbling walls of Ebonclaw Pack's ancestral estate, Kael Vale wasn't doing anything productive. In fact, he could barely move.

Drunk beyond recognition, he was curled up on the bathroom floor, body wracked with nausea. Every muscle spasmed, and his stomach felt as though it was being torn apart from the inside.

The bitter stench of vomit filled the air as he clung to the toilet, dry heaving until he collapsed backward, forehead slick with sweat.

Pain shot through his gut like claws shredding him open.

"Sh\*t," he croaked, dragging himself toward the living room on trembling arms. He stumbled to the sofa and collapsed face-first onto the cushions, curling up like a wounded animal.

"Riley..." he whispered through gritted teeth. "My stomach... the pills..."

From the hallway, Luna Zara and Alpha Alaric stepped into the room. One look at the scene and Zara gasped.

Empty liquor bottles lay scattered across the floor, the sharp sting of alcohol thick in the air. Kael's face had lost all its color. His lips were pale and cracked. His eyes sunken with guilt and exhaustion.

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Chapter 104

Zara rushed to his side, kneeling beside him with trembling hands. "Kael, baby, what did you do to yourself?"

He didn't answer—only curled tighter, one arm wrapped around his stomach, the other reaching toward an empty bottle as if searching for something to numb the pain.

Alaric stood at a distance, his expression carved from stone. But when he heard Kael whisper Riley's name again, his eyes darkened with rage.

"That cursed girl again?" he snapped. "Still thinking about her? What the hell did she ever give you, other than shame?"

Zara turned sharply. "Alaric!"

But Alaric didn't stop. His fury had been building for days.

"She's gone. Good riddance. With a reputation like that, she'd be better off rotting in some Rogue pit!"

He stormed to the table, slamming his palm down hard enough to shake the empty glasses. "You think she's worth mourning? Compared to Scarlett? Compared to your real sister?"

Zara's voice trembled. "She is his sister too—"

"She was nothing until we dragged her out of that filthy orphanage!" Alaric snarled. "Don't forget why we brought her back! Not out of kindness. Not out of guilt. We needed her."

His voice dropped to a cruel whisper, eyes gleaming with calculation.

"And now... it turns out the little rat's got white wolf blood in her veins."

Zara froze.

Kael stirred faintly on the couch.

"Yes," Alaric continued coldly. "Rare. Almost extinct. Do you know what that means? Her blood alone is worth more than everything in this house. The Council would pay

anything to study her. And her organs?" He gave a slow, sinister smile. "Still pure. Still usable."

Zara turned away, tears burning her eyes. She couldn't listen to this. Not again.

But Alaric wasn't finished. He forced his voice into a gentle tone, feigning concern.

"I'll send scouts. She couldn't have gotten far, not in her condition. We'll find her... bring her back. For Kael's sake, of course."

Kael didn't respond. His head lolled back, barely conscious. Pain twisted his features, but somewhere deep inside, the guilt had settled.

He remembered the quiet way Riley used to brew his teas. The way her small hands would press against his stomach after every meal. The way she'd hold back her own pain just to soothe his.

When she was around, his stomach hadn't hurt.

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When she left... it had never stopped.

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"I'm sorry," he murmured, barely audible.

Zara brushed back his damp hair and cradled him gently. "Shhh. Don't think about it right now."

But Kael knew.

He'd done this to her.

He'd handed Riley over to wolves who never cared if she lived or died. And now—now that she was gone—it was as if some great piece of his soul had been torn out and left to bleed.

He closed his eyes, silently praying that she was still alive.

Somewhere.

Even if he'd never deserve her forgiveness again.

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[ 830 words ]

Chapter 105

Finished

Kael Vale lay curled on the sofa in his darkened room, the thick shadows outside the Ebonclaw Pack estate casting long fingers across the floorboards. His hands clutched a pillow tightly against his chest, and his face was buried deep within it, muffling the sound of the occasional, involuntary sob.

But even with the fabric pressed against his face, he couldn't block out the visions in his mind.

Riley.

Every thought, every breath, every beat of his heart seemed to summon her. Her silhouette. Her voice. Her soft hands patting his back during another of his stomach flare-ups. The way her eyes held no blame even when she was the one hurting.

And now she was gone.

It had been days since she vanished, and still, not a single whisper of her whereabouts. Kael's mind tormented him with cruel possibilities—starving on the streets, collapsing from pain, hunted by Rogues... or

worse.

A new wave of guilt crashed through him.

Why hadn't I done more? Why didn't I believe her?

If he had stood up for her when she was dragged through the courts like a criminal...

If he had protected her when everyone else turned away...

If he had just shown her a fraction of the kindness she so freely gave...

Maybe she wouldn't have left. Maybe she would still be here.

And now... after five years in that cursed prison, her body was permanently damaged. Her wolf hadn't fully healed. And yet he—Kael Vale—had dared to question her loyalty? Her worth?

The pain in his gut twisted viciously, but it was nothing compared to the ache in his chest.

From the doorway, Luna Zara watched with wet eyes as her son broke down in silence. She stepped inside slowly, placing a hand on his shaking back, gently rubbing circles in a futile attempt to soothe him.

"It's alright, Kael," she whispered. "We'll find her. Your father's already sent scouts."

Kael didn't respond. His shoulders trembled, his body racked with guilt and physical pain.

Zara cast a glance toward the hallway, where Alpha Alaric stood, arms crossed. His face was impassive, but the hard glint in his eyes betrayed his irritation,

"She made her choice," he muttered. "She ran. If she wants to live like a Rogue, let her."

Zara shot him a warning look. "Not now,"

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Chapter 105

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But Alaric wasn't finished. He stepped forward, lowering his voice just enough that Kael could still hear.

"And don't forget who let her into this house. She brought nothing but chaos. Fighting with Scarlett. Disrespecting elders. Do you really think she's not out there plotting something now?"

Kael flinched.

Zara ignored her mate's bitter words and pulled a blanket over Kael's trembling form. "Rest, sweetheart. I'll have the kitchen prepare you something warm."

A while later, a young she-wolf servant arrived with a tray and a soft voice. "Alpha Kael, I brought some millet and pumpkin porridge. It's good for your stomach."

Kael slowly sat up, his movements sluggish and shaky. The familiar scent wafted toward him—sweet and earthy—but the moment the porridge touched his tongue, he grimaced and pulled away.

"It tastes wrong."

The servant blinked. "But it's pumpkin millet porridge. It's always the same."

Kael shook his head, setting the bowl aside with a clatter. "No. The one I used to have... it was different. Smoother. Richer. It helped."

Understanding dawned on the servant's face. "Ah... you mean the one Mia used to make."

Kael stilled.

"Mia always said it wasn't about the ingredients, but the time and care. She simmered it on low heat for two hours, stirring it constantly to bring out the rice oils. Said that was how it truly 'nourished the gut. And—" the servant hesitated, "—she said she learned the method from the young Miss. From Riley."

Kael's heart clenched painfully.

Riley... who had grown up in an underfunded rogue settlement, yet still managed to learn how to make porridge that soothed his pain better than any medicine. Riley, who had remembered he had stomach issues and gone out of her way to share what she knew with Mia, All for him.

"She told Mia... that if she didn't have time to care for you herself, at least someone else should."

The words sliced through Kael's guilt like claws through flesh.

After Riley was imprisoned, Mia had continued the porridge ritual for a time. But without Riley's gentle reminders, the effort had waned. Days stretched into weeks between proper meals. Slowly, Kael's stomach condition returned—and worsened.

“Make it like she did.” Kael rasped. “Exactly like she did.”

The servant bit her lip. “Alpha Kael, I... I'm sorry. I don't know the full method. Mia said it required constant attention. Stirring, watching for consistency. No one else has the time. It takes over two hours....”

“Then make time,” he snapped, his voice suddenly sharp. “If you can't do it, bring Mia back.”

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## Chapter 105

The servant stepped back with a nervous nod and quickly retreated from the room.

Kael dropped back against the cushions, staring up at the ceiling with hollow eyes.

Even in absence, Riley's presence lingered in everything.

The food. The air. The aching silence.

And now that she was gone, only pain remained.

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[ 914 words ]

## Chapter 106

Kael Vale's mouth was dry, his chest heavy with bitterness. There was no point waiting anymore.

“The porridge... forget it,” he muttered hoarsely. “Just get me my stomach medicine.”

The servant hesitated, clearly distressed. “Alpha Kael... we—we don't know where your medicine is kept. And we don't know the type you usually take. It was always Mia who handled it for you.”

Kael's head fell back with a thud against the couch cushion, a deep groan escaping him. The pain in his gut surged like a tide crashing against the shore, relentless and merciless. His fingers dug into his abdomen as though he could physically hold the pain in place.

The servant, her expression full of helplessness, offered a quiet sigh and carried the untouched bowl of porridge away.

The room was swallowed once again in suffocating silence.

Kael remained curled on the sofa like a wounded beast, his hollow gaze fixed on the ceiling. No medicine. No porridge. Just agony—raw and endless.

Minutes passed. Hours, maybe.

It wasn't until the pain finally dulled to a throbbing ache that Kael managed to force himself upright. Outside the windows, the last rays of dusk had long vanished, and the estate was wrapped in the hush of night. His parents were already asleep.

Dragging his feet, he made his way to the kitchen and poured himself a glass of warm water. The heat trickled down his throat and pooled in his stomach, offering a faint reprieve from the dull ache.

But even then, his feet didn't carry him back upstairs.

Instead, they led him to the storage room.

The moment he pushed the door open, a rush of musty air, tinged with the scent of damp wood and old fabric, swept out to greet him. Kael wrinkled his nose, hesitating before stepping in. The dim overhead light buzzed faintly above, casting long shadows that danced across the concrete floor.

His eyes slowly adjusted to the gloom. In the far corner, wedged between old crates and unused furniture, sat a small wooden desk. Scuffed and out of place amidst the luxury of the Ebonclaw Pack's estate, it looked as if it had been plucked from another world entirely.

And in a way, it had.

Kael approached and ran his fingers along its surface. The desk was covered in books—weathered textbooks and worn notebooks with frayed corners. Every one of them belonged to Riley.

Her high school years, captured in ink and paper.

He pulled a random book toward him and flipped it open

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Chapter 106

Pages after pages of notes greeted him. Tiny handwriting, neat and consistent, filled the margins with highlighted key points and underlined explanations. Even under the flickering light, the intensity of her effort shone through.

Kael swallowed hard.

He could see her there, hunched over this very desk, lips pressed together in focus, eyes shining with determination. She had once told him, the day she came home from Mooncrest Prison, that she used to be the top student at Mooncrest Academy.

He had laughed it off.

But now... now the truth lay in his hands.

Riley had fought her way to the top not just in school—but in life. She had believed that knowledge could be her way out. That her future didn't have to be defined by her bloodline or her place in the Pack.

Until they threw her behind bars and burned everything she built.

Kael exhaled shakily and opened the desk drawer.

What he found inside sent a jolt through him.

Dozens of award certificates.

Each one a vibrant red or gold, each proclaiming her excellence—Best Student, Outstanding Pack Cadet, First in Class, Regional Academic Champion. The list was endless. He stared, stunned, as he began laying them out one by one.

Twelve years. From primary school to high school.

It was a quiet legacy. A lifetime of silent struggle.

These weren't just pieces of paper. They were her voice—crying out, I worked for this. I earned it. I mattered.

And they had all ignored it.

Kael's throat tightened. His hands began to tremble as he touched each certificate like it was something sacred. Because to him, they were. He had never seen her this way—truly seen her.

To think... all this time, while they had labeled her difficult, jealous, and dangerous, she had been quietly carrying the weight of a world that had never once been kind to her.

Kael suddenly couldn't bear it.

He shoved the stack of certificates back into the drawer, breathing hard, guilt crashing into him like a tidal wave. He gripped the edge of the desk to keep himself grounded, to keep from screaming.

But curiosity gnawed at him.

He reached for the second drawer.

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Chapter 106

And then, in the faint light, he saw it.

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A crimson envelope. The seal of Ashmoor Academy—the most prestigious academic institution in all the werewolf territories.

With shaking hands, he pulled it out.

The gold letters gleamed at him mockingly.

“Admission Granted.”

His mind blanked.

No one—no one from the lower-ranking wolf families ever got into Ashmoor. Even many noble-blooded heirs failed. And Riley... she'd made it. Despite the abuse. Despite the poverty. Despite being born to a forgotten branch of the Ebonclaw Pack and locked away in a pack that never wanted her.

She had done it..

And they had let it rot here. In a drawer. In the dark.

Kael's knees nearly buckled. He sank into the chair, the letter trembling in his hand. His heart thundered in his ears, rage and regret twisting through every nerve.

"This... this can't be real..." he whispered.

But it was.

The evidence was right in front of him.

He was the fool. They all were.

And now... it might be too late to make it right.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 880 words ]

Chapter 107

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Ashmoor Academy.

The name alone was sacred. It was the pinnacle of academic achievement across all werewolf territories—an institution countless students across the four quadrants of the realm would die to enter. Tens of thousands tried each year, and most failed, leaving behind only broken dreams and bitter regrets.

And Riley—the sister Kael Vale had misunderstood, condemned, and cast aside—had been accepted.

His hand trembled as it reached out for the letter, as though it were something divine and fragile all at once. The moment his fingers brushed the thick parchment, his entire body shuddered. It felt like electricity surged through him, leaving behind a trail of frozen disbelief and rising panic.

Memories assaulted him in waves.

He remembered the way he hadn't believed her—how easily he'd let her be painted as the villain. How he stood silent as their parents misjudged her again and again. And worst of all, how he had stared into her eyes in court and pointed at her, calling her the culprit, sentencing her with words sharper than any blade.

Her expression then—devastated, disbelieving—burned itself into his mind now like a cursed brand.

His body began to tremble uncontrollably. His breaths came short and fast, like someone drowning in guilt and trying desperately to find air. The spinning sensation in his head worsened until his knees gave out, and he collapsed onto the desk chair, as if the truth itself had crushed him.

“I destroyed her...” he choked out, the words barely a whisper. “I destroyed her life with my own hands...”

Tears came suddenly and without restraint. Hot streams slid down his cheeks and splashed onto the letter, blurring the golden Ashmoor crest. He made no effort to stop them. His entire being felt hollow, a shell filled with shame and self-loathing.

Slumped in the chair, Kael stared ahead with empty eyes, his soul cracking beneath the weight of his guilt. The letter in his hands wasn't just a symbol of what Riley could have been—it was a testament to everything he had stolen from her.

The damage he had done was far deeper than he had ever imagined.

His vision dimmed, and for a terrifying moment, he nearly lost consciousness. The black edges of exhaustion crept in, but he fought against it, breathing heavily, grounding himself in the pain he deserved.

Only when the dizziness finally receded did he raise a shaking hand to wipe at his face, roughly smearing away the tears. He exhaled, preparing to return the letter to its drawer—only to pause when something caught his eye.

There, buried in the corner, was a worn, faded leather-bound notebook.

A journal.

Kael froze.

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Chapter 107

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His rational mind told him to stop—to leave it alone. That nothing good could come from reading her innermost thoughts. That if the letter had shattered him, the journal might annihilate what remained.

But his heart, heavy and desperate, reached for the book anyway.

As he opened the first page, a photograph slipped out.

A family portrait.

His breath hitched.

In the photo, Alpha Alaric and Luna Zara sat proudly in the center. Scarlett nestled beside Zara, smiling with that sweet perfection she always wore. Kael himself stood next to his father, hands in pockets, eyes aloof.

And off to the side—awkwardly distant—stood Riley.

The arrangement was no accident.

The moment he saw it, memories came rushing back like floodwaters breaching a dam.

It had been taken on a spring holiday. The skies were clear, the flowers in the garden had just bloomed, and Scarlett had suggested they take a family portrait among the blossoms. Everyone had gotten ready. Then someone remembered that Lucky—their beloved golden-furred wolfhound—was missing.

Riley had gone to retrieve him.

She had carried the old hound in her arms, her eyes bright and hopeful as she asked Kael, “Big Brother, what are you doing?”

He had barely looked at her. “Just taking a family photo.”

She had smiled. So hopeful. So eager.

During the photo, she had tried to stand beside him—thinking, foolishly, that she belonged. He remembered the way his skin had crawled with discomfort. He hadn’t allowed any girl other than Scarlett to stand near him back then.

Without a thought, he had pushed Riley away.

He didn’t even notice the flicker of hurt in her eyes.

Afterward, Scarlett suggested a short vacation. A celebration for the family. Their parents agreed instantly. They packed their bags, and with Scarlett, Kael, Alaric, Zara—and Lucky—they left for the Northern Isles.

They stayed away until the last day of the holiday.

When they returned, Riley confronted them.

“Why didn’t you take me?” she had asked, voice trembling with confusion and heartbreak.

Kael, exhausted from the trip, had snapped. “You’re not one of us. Why would we bring you?”

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## Chapter 107

And that was it. The first true fracture.

He remembered how angry she had looked.

How sad.

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In that same household, their pet hound had its own private room, maintained even after Lucky passed away. The room was still cleaned regularly, its toys untouched, preserved like a shrine.

But Riley—their own blood—had no place.

She wasn't treated like a sister. Not even like a servant.

She was just a mistake that everyone wanted to forget.

Kael stared at the photo in his hands. They had all stood there smiling, with the perfect illusion of family. Even the hound had been in the center.

And Riley? She had been pushed aside like she didn't belong.

And the cruelest part?

She had still smiled for the camera.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 817 words ]

## Chapter 108

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Even the family's wolfhound had been taken on that spring vacation.

Groomed monthly, fed imported kibble enriched with omega oils and calcium tablets, pampered with more love and resources than most orphaned pups in the Eastern Wilds could ever dream of—Fubao had lived like royalty.

But Riley?

She had been left behind like an afterthought.

They'd spent five-figure sums each month on Fubao's well-being. But Riley? She couldn't even afford her tuition unless she worked part-time and relied on academic scholarships.

The contrast was absurd. Cruel.

A montage of memories surged through Kael Vale's mind like a broken projector, flickering in bursts—Riley standing by the garden gate, clutching her books tightly as the family drove off for their trip; Riley eating reheated leftovers while the family feasted; Riley trying to patch her torn uniform while Scarlett got silk-lined cloaks imported from the capital.

The ache in his gut exploded.

A violent, scorching pain tore through his abdomen like a blade, and before Kael could register what was happening, a thick mouthful of blood burst from his lips, splattering across the desk—across Riley's photo.

His hands scrambled in a panic, trying to wipe it away.

"No, no, no..."

But the more he wiped, the worse it got. The blood only smeared deeper, staining Riley's face until it looked as if she were soaked in crimson.

It was mockery. Divine punishment.

Her life—her existence in the Vale family—had been soaked in blood since the beginning.

Kael stumbled back, barely breathing, his chest constricting with guilt so suffocating it made him dizzy. He slammed the journal shut, threw it into the drawer, and yanked it closed with trembling fingers.

He gripped the bloodied photograph in his hand, desperate to leave the storage room, to escape the ghosts clawing at his soul.

But as he stood, the world tilted dangerously.

The spinning came fast. His vision darkened. Then he collapsed.

He hit the floor with a thud, pain radiating from his gut like shards of ice. More blood spilled from his lips, pooling beside his head. His fingers twitched against the cold stone, and he groaned, helpless.

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Chapter 108

His hand clawed for his phone.

It took three tries before he could dial.

The line clicked.

“Kael? What’s going on?” Theo’s voice came through, groggy but alert.

Kael opened his mouth, but no words came. Just choking coughs. More blood.

Theo’s voice rose in alarm. “Kael?! What the hell happened—are you injured?!”

After a long silence broken only by labored breathing, Kael finally whispered in a voice that barely resembled his own.

“I... I was wrong... I was so wrong...”

Theo froze on the other end.

The pain. The sorrow. It was like Kael's soul had cracked.

“I saw her awards,” Kael whispered. “Her Ashmoor letter. The portrait. Gods, what have I done...”

Theo didn't know what to say. He'd never heard Kael like this—not even when Kael had broken three ribs. during a border skirmish. This wasn't physical pain.

This was grief.

“I'm coming to you now. Don't move. Don't hang up.” Theo said firmly, already throwing on his coat.

The line went dead.

Kael lay motionless, staring blankly at the ceiling, his blood and tears pooling beneath him.

Memories flooded in—Riley shivering in the hallway during a snowstorm because she had no proper coat. Riley looking longingly at the locked study where Kael and Scarlett prepared for academic competitions. Riley quietly sewing her own uniform after Scarlett “accidentally” tore it.

Every slight. Every cruelty,

He hadn't noticed.

Hadn't cared.

Now, all he could see was her face, eyes hollow with betrayal.

The photograph in his hand, soaked in his own blood, pulsed like a curse. He could almost hear her voice:

“Why didn't you take me?”

By the time Theo arrived, the manor was quiet—too quiet.

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Chapter 108

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His urgent knocking woke Lord Alaric and Lady Zara, who blinked sleepily at their Beta's grim expression

Something was wrong.

"Kael." Theo said quickly. "Where is he?"

They searched every hallway, every guest room, every chamber. Nothing.

Theo's phone rang. He picked it up—and a shrill ringtone echoed faintly through the walls.

They followed the sound to the storage wing.

The door was ajar.

Theo stepped in first.

The scent hit him like a wall.

Blood.

Heavy. Metallic. Drenched in guilt.

His boots crunched slightly on the stone floor as he stepped inside. His heart plummeted.

There Kael lay, collapsed beside a dark pool of blood, his face pallid, his lips stained crimson. His hand was clenched tightly around a photograph, crumpled and wet with blood and tears.

Theo dropped to his knees beside him. "Kael?! Kael, wake up!"

Kael didn't respond.

Theo tried to heal Kael, but Kael's wolf had completely shut itself off, leaving Kael unable to establish any connection with him.

Behind him, Alaric and Zara froze in the doorway.

For one brief moment, all the carefully maintained illusion of noble dignity shattered.

Zara gasped, stumbling back, a trembling hand covering her mouth.

Alaric's face twisted into something between horror and fury.

Their son—the one they'd raised to be the pride of the Vale name—was lying broken on the ground, all because of the daughter they'd tried to erase.

“Go get the Awakening Healer!” Theo barked. “NOW!”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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Chapter 109

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When Kael Vale collapsed in a pool of his own blood, both Alpha Alaric and Luna Zara were stunned. They stood frozen at the threshold of the storage room, unable to process the scene before them.

Zara's eyes welled up with tears almost immediately.

“He was perfectly fine this morning... How did things come to this?”

But as her sobs intensified, a sudden realization flickered across her face. Her weeping halted abruptly, and her eyes scanned the cramped, damp storage room—Riley’s former “bedroom.”

Instead of feeling guilty that Kael had once forced his sister to live in such squalor, her mind twisted the scene into blame.

“This is all Riley’s fault! That ungrateful girl kept provoking Kael—how could she do this to her own brother? If something happens to him, I swear I’ll never forgive her!”

Alaric, as if finally given a place to direct his rage, let out a furious snarl.

“That cursed girl! Since the day she returned to the Ebonclaw Pack, we’ve known no peace! Kael loved her- trusted her—and she repaid him by turning our home upside down!”

“She’s always been like this,” Zara added, voice shaking with fury. “A poisonous brat who brings nothing but misery. Look what she’s done now—Kael’s life could be in danger!”

Theo Hale’s jaw clenched. The rage bubbling in his chest was nearly uncontainable. Here Kael was- collapsed, bloodied, possibly dying—and these two could only think to curse Riley.

He stepped forward, shielding Kael’s body with his own.

“Enough! This isn’t the time to assign blame. Help me carry him—NOW!”

Without waiting for them to respond, Theo bent down and lifted Kael’s upper body with trembling arms. Alaric and Zara, startled out of their fog, stumbled forward to help. Together, the three of them got Kael

into the car.

Even during the frantic drive to Mooncrest First Hospital, the couple wouldn’t stop muttering curses against Riley. If not for the need to have someone present to sign for emergency surgery, Theo would’ve thrown them both out of the vehicle.

Inside the hospital, Ronan Duskcliff was wandering the dimly lit corridor, his head still wrapped in gauze. Insomnia had driven him out of bed, and now the sterile quiet of the ward weighed heavily on his shoulders.

The sound of rapid footsteps and urgent voices shattered the silence.

Two gurneys raced down the hall—he pressed back against the wall, watching them rush past.

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Chapter 109

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The first figure was unmistakable: Kael Vale, unconscious, deathly pale, with blood crusted at the corners of his mouth. The second... Maddox.

Maddox's leg was twisted at a grotesque angle, and he howled in pain as the medics tried to steady him.

Ronan's breath caught. His already pale face turned ashen.

He turned instinctively, trailing the gurneys down the hall until they vanished through the double doors of the emergency ward.

There, outside the ER, stood Alaric and Zara. They paced like caged animals, radiating anxiety.

When they noticed Ronan's approach, Alaric frowned, eyeing the gauze on his head.

"Alpha Ronan, what happened to you?"

"Just a minor injury," Ronan muttered. "What happened to Kael?"

Alaric, his fury barely contained, snapped, "That damn girl Riley happened! Who knows what venom she spewed to Kael—he coughed up blood!"

"She's already left the Pack, and she's still cursing us from the shadows—absolutely vile!"

Zara chimed in with a sob, "She's like a demon child, always bringing misfortune. We tried everything to help her, but all she's ever done is cause pain. And now this... Now Kael might die because of her!"

Ronan said nothing. He stood in silence, his expression unreadable. But his eyes darkened as he absorbed every word.

Was this the truth? Or was it just another layer of the web spun by the Ebonclaw Pack?

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[ 669 words ]

Chapter 110

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Ronan Duskliff stood silently, his face calm yet unreadable—neither fully convinced nor skeptical of the accusations made by Alpha Alaric and Luna Zara. His eyes lowered slightly, as if deep in thought, and he said nothing.

Suddenly, a dry, raspy laugh shattered the heavy silence, echoing down the dim corridor like the howl of a wounded wolf.

Alpha Alaric, Luna Zara, and Ronan all turned instinctively. Pushed forward by a nurse was Ronan's sister Tessa, her frail figure seated in a wheelchair.

The sight of her caused Alaric and Zara's pupils to constrict sharply. The fierce arrogance and harsh words they had just thrown at Riley vanished instantly, replaced by palpable dread and fear.

Alaric's face paled, sweat beading down his temple, while Zara's body trembled as if gripped by an invisible hand clutching her heart. Her eyes were wide and filled with terror.

They knew the truth better than anyone.

Scarlett had cunningly lured her deep into the Black Forest under the pretense of a peaceful walk. Once isolated in the shadowy, twisted woods, Scarlett struck with ruthless cruelty, leaving Tessa severely injured and unconscious.

She was found days later by hunters, barely clinging to life, and had since been trapped in a vegetative state, her body broken but her spirit slowly stirring beneath.

Zara had never witnessed the attack, but when Tessa begged for help before slipping into unconsciousness, Zara coldly turned her back and immediately accused Riley of causing her fate.

Together, Zara and Alaric conspired to blame Riley, fabricating lies to cover Scarlett's heinous betrayal.

Zara even deleted the only surveillance footage that could have proved Riley's innocence.

The guilt they carried was as heavy as iron chains, and seeing Tessa alive—though fragile—filled them with a deep, gnawing anxiety.

Alaric, experienced in the brutal politics of the Ebonclaw Pack, masked his inner turmoil quickly, but the unease hidden behind his calm eyes was like a river of darkness flowing beneath a frozen lake.

Zara was less composed—since marrying into the Ebonclaw Pack, she had become a delicate, frightened wife, easily shaken.

Her trembling voice broke the silence, "What... what do you want now?"

Tessa's eerie smile faded into a hollow, haunting blankness. Years of unconsciousness had drained the blood from her face, leaving hollow cheeks and large, ghostly eyes that seemed to pierce the shadows like a wolf stalking its prey.

Ronan rushed forward, concern carved into his features. "Tessa, you shouldn't be up yet. Your body isn't healed. You need rest."

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Chapter 110

Tessa's gaze locked onto Ronan's with icy intensity, eyes sharp as silver daggers.

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"Tessa, what's wrong?" Ronan's voice wavered as he searched her impassive expression.

Though she had just awakened after five years trapped in darkness, she fought tirelessly to speak—for Riley's sake, to clear her name and reveal Scarlett's true nature.

What cut her deepest was that Ronan, her own brother, had never once asked who destroyed her life.

Had he asked, she could have blinked or nodded, or given any sign.

It was Scarlett.

Her brother needed to avenge her, to send Scarlett to justice.

But no question ever came.

The brother who once cradled her like a cherished pup had become distant, cold, and cruel- unrecognizable and despised.

Her heart shattered into a thousand bloody shards.

With a twisted, grim smile, Tessa summoned all her remaining strength to force two rasped words from her parched throat:

“Retribution.”

Her voice was faint and cracked, but in the oppressive silence, it rang out like silver claws tearing flesh, sinking deep into every soul present.

Then a dry, wild laugh erupted—madness and pain entwined in a haunting howl.

Ronan’s face went pale as death.

He burned with rage and sorrow but dared not lay a hand on his own sister. Instead, he snapped at the nurse, “Wheel her away! She’s too weak to cause a scene.”

The nurse hurriedly pushed the wheelchair.

Tessa slumped back, powerless, but her eyes never left Ronan’s. The loathing and hatred blazing there were as tangible and sharp as silver fangs, aimed straight at his heart.

Though broken in body, her spirit screamed silently, repeating over and over like a cursed wolf’s howl —“Retribution... Retribution...”

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Chapter 111

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Ronan Duskcliff's head throbbed as if split by a thousand sharp claws. He kept telling himself that everything he had done to Riley was for Tessa's sake yet the only thing he gained in return was Tessa's cold, burning hatred.

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He didn't understand how things had spiraled so far out of control.

Ronan remained rooted to the spot, watching as Tessa's fragile figure slowly vanished at the end of the corridor. Yet her resentment lingered in the air like a bitter scent, clawing at his mind, refusing to let go.

Time slipped away unnoticed.

Eventually, the emergency room doors creaked open. Theo Hale removed his mask, exhaustion etched deep into his features. "Kael Vale suffered a perforated stomach. He's out of immediate danger, but needs to stay under observation for now."

Alpha Alaric and Luna Zara exhaled in relief. But the momentary calm shattered as Zara's tears welled anew. "This is all Riley's fault. If not for her, Kael wouldn't be suffering like this..."

Theo's patience snapped. His voice dropped cold and sharp, cutting through their self-pity. "Stop deceiving yourselves. Riley is the one who's been hurt. Kael's condition is a product of his own guilt eating him alive."

"If you truly cared about Kael, you'd reflect on how you've treated Riley all these years."

With that, Theo turned away from the stunned couple and pushed Kael's gurney back into the ER.

In another room nearby, Maddox was wheeled out, his entire lower leg swathed in thick bandages. The narcotics still dulling his senses kept him unconscious, but his furrowed brow betrayed the agony coursing through him even in sleep.

After emergency treatment, Kael had already slipped into unconsciousness.

Ronan's gaze darkened as he watched both men vanish behind hospital doors. Ever since Riley's disappearance, those who had wronged her seemed cursed—one after another, misfortune following close behind.

He thought of the truth—that Riley was innocent, that she was not responsible for Tessa's broken body. And the harsh years Riley had endured behind cold bars. The weight in his chest grew heavier.

Was this... retribution?

A wolf's justice, clawing back at those who had once inflicted pain.

Ronan lingered outside the ward for a long time, feet dragging, weighed down by dread and guilt. His first thought had been to return to his own room, but the haunting image of Tessa's deranged expression kept him rooted.

He changed course and entered Tessa's room instead.

There, she lay motionless on the bed, eyes wide open, staring into the void outside the window.

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Chapter 111

She had refused to close her eyes since waking from her five-year slumber.

Five years lost to darkness, five years stolen from the world.

Closing her eyes meant surrendering once more to that living nightmare of nothingness—the empty husk

she had become.

Ronan approached softly, voice low and cautious. "Tessa..."

She gave no sign.

He tried again, voice tinged with desperation. "It's me, your brother. Are you not glad to see me?"

Glad?

A bitter, mocking smile curled at Tessa's cracked lips.

If Ronan truly cared, he wouldn't have defended Scarlett.

If he truly cared, he would have pursued justice for the sister who had been shattered, and for Riley, who had paid dearly for another's sins.

But he wasn't here to see her recovery—he was here to witness her suffering.

A cruel hypocrisy more poisonous than any fang.

There was another cruel truth gnawing at her: since waking, neither father nor mother had come to see her

once.

Before her fall into the void, her parents had been devoted.

She refused to believe they would simply ignore her awakening.

The only explanation was that Ronan had concealed her recovery from them.

He feared that if her parents found out, they would demand answers—would pry into the dark secrets that might shatter the fragile façade protecting Scarlett.

For Scarlett's sake, Ronan had spared no effort *to* bury the truth.

Hadn't he once claimed not to care for Scarlett?

Hadn't he pursued Riley relentlessly through high school for three years?

Hadn't he planned to break off the engagement with Scarlett for Riley's sake?

Yet when Scarlett's monstrous acts were on the verge of exposure, her "beloved" brother turned his back.

He chose to deceive their parents.

He chose to let his sister suffer in silence.

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Chapter 111

He chose to allow Riley to carry the label of attempted murder.

Laughable.

Absolutely laughable.

A wolf who abandons his own blood is no brother.

And those hollow words—"It's me, your brother. Are you not glad to see me?"—felt like the sharpest betrayal, mocking her shattered spirit.

Tessa's heart, fragile and bleeding, curled inward, torn between the wolf's fierce instinct to survive and the ghost of betrayal cutting through her soul like a silver blade.

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Chapter 112

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Frushed

Tessa remained silent, refusing to even glance at Ronan. Her sole desire was for her shattered body to heal as quickly as possible.

Ronan's smile faltered, the cracks beginning to show beneath his forced calm. Yet he stubbornly masked his frustration, speaking to her with an air of helplessness. "Still mad at your brother, huh?"

He paused, then continued, voice softer but firm. "I know what's in your heart. Tessa. But I can't do what you want."

"You're my flesh and blood. Everything I've done has been for you."

For her?

A bitter, hollow laugh curled behind Tessa's cracked lips. For her—meaning letting her suffer and swallow every injustice? For her—meaning allowing the real culprit to roam free?

Before she even awakened from that endless void, Riley was crushed beneath the weight of blame.

Now that she was awake, where was the justice? Where was Scarlett behind bars?

Was love—Ronan's love—just another form of cruelty?

If she could move, she would have slapped him hard across the face.

At last, Tessa's eyes snapped toward him—eyes ablaze with loathing and venomous hate.

She wanted to shout "Get lost!" but her body betrayed her; mute and motionless, she could only send her fury in a blazing glare.

Ronan, however, dismissed it as childish stubbornness. He reached out, brushing a pale strand of hair from her face, coaxing softly, "Tessa, please don't be difficult."

"You're still too weak. Anger won't help your body heal."

Knowing full well she didn't want to hear this, he pressed on regardless.

A surge of rage exploded in Tessa's chest, scorching hot and wild.

Go away. Just go away!

Her mind screamed in torment.

She hated Ronan with every fiber of her being—for his blind loyalty, for his cold heart, for her own helplessness trapped in a broken body.

Her eyes burned with fury, as if willing to incinerate the brother who had betrayed her so completely.

Ronan's gaze wavered under her hateful stare. Uneasy, he averted his eyes and busied himself with tidying the bedside table, muttering, "Once you're stronger, I'll send you abroad. The healing there will be better."

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Chapter 112

Each word felt like a serrated fang digging into Tessa's raw wounds.

Go abroad?

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Right now, all she could think about was exposing the truth—clearing Riley's name and bringing Scarlett's monstrous treachery to light.

Yet Ronan's mind was elsewhere, plotting to send her away, to silence her before she could roar.

Her chest heaved violently with every breath, as if the fire within threatened to consume her.

She fixed Ronan with a venomous glare—his face, once familiar, now as repulsive as a traitor's snarl. She wished she could tear him limb from limb.

Summoning every ounce of strength, her throat burned like wildfire as she strained to force out a single word.

"Leave!"

Ronan froze, unprepared for such fierce defiance from his broken sister.

Surprise flickered in his eyes before he sighed heavily. “Tessa, you’ve grown up. It’s time to be sensible.”

That sanctimonious tone poured fuel onto Tessa’s blazing fury.

Her trembling hands clenched the sheets until her knuckles whitened, the seething hatred tightening its grip on her.

Her lips quivered, desperate to speak but only managing ragged breaths.

Unmoved by the storm within her, Ronan babbled on.

“Scarlett grew up with you. You were spoiled, and she was the only one who stayed by your side. I don’t want to see you lose your only friend.”

“And I believe Scarlett. What happened back then wasn’t intentional. She must regret it deeply. Let’s just stop digging into it, okay?”

“You two are friends. Don’t you remember how kind and innocent Scarlett is?”

Every syllable was a dull blade dragging across Tessa’s bleeding heart.

Her wide eyes pierced Ronan as if he were a stranger.

In her soul, she screamed: Friends? The woman who turned me into a lifeless husk, who imprisoned Riley with lies—how could she be a friend?

Scarlett kind and innocent?

The cruelest joke she had ever heard.

If not for overhearing that wicked father–daughter conspiracy by accident, maybe she too would have

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believed in Scarlett's façade.

But the truth clawed its way out: it was that vile secret that condemned her to this fate.

Even more absurd, the fools who called themselves her family—her mother and Kael—continued to shield Scarlett, burying their own daughter and sister beneath lies and pain.

One day, they would drown in regret for their foolishness.

Retribution.

It was coming.

It always comes.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 1,195 words ]

Chapter 113

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The Duskgrave estate stood silent under the early morning sun, but inside, a quiet warmth had taken root ever since Riley arrived. The girl who had once been starved for affection now basked in the steady, nurturing love from Matriarch Duskgrave, Mrs. Beck, and Mia. Their devotion was a balm to Riley's fractured spirit.

Matriarch Duskgrave's greatest joy these days was indulging in endless shopping sprees—not for herself, but for Riley. Clothes, shoes, jewelry, and handbags filled the vast closets, each piece carefully selected to adorn the young woman as if she were a queen of the Stormridge Pack.

"My granddaughter-in-law is young and beautiful. It would be a shame not to dress her in finery worthy of her." the matriarch often declared with a proud sparkle in her eyes.

Even though Riley rarely left her room, the matriarch's enthusiasm never waned. Meanwhile, Mrs. Beck and Mia took turns preparing all manner of delicious meals, hoping to coax some strength back into the pale girl.

In just a few short days, Riley's face had regained some color. Though still slender, the heavy shadows of sorrow that once cloaked her had begun to lift. The light of a fragile hope glimmered behind her eyes.

Yet, apart from mealtimes, Riley remained cloistered within the confines of her room, retreating behind a door she rarely opened. Concerned for her mental well-being, the matriarch had several times tried to coax her out, but Riley resisted.

It was Lucien who finally put a stop to the attempts. "Grandmother, the matriarch's birthday is just a month away. Riley is preparing a special gift for her. Please let her have her space."

Hearing this, Matriarch Duskgrave's eyes brightened with warmth and understanding. She relented, her heart quietly moved by the girl's thoughtfulness, and chose not to disturb Riley any further.

One crisp morning, as Lucien ate breakfast overlooking the sprawling grounds, his phone buzzed with a call from Duke, his trusted aide.

He moved away from the table and answered, voice calm. "Hello?"

On the other end, Duke's tone was sharp and efficient. "Sir, Maddox's leg has been broken by operatives I deployed. He remains unconscious in the hospital. What are your next orders?"

Lucien's eyes darkened at the mention of Maddox, the lawyer who had maliciously sent Riley—an innocent—into the pack's prison. His expression tightened, muscles twitching in suppressed rage.

"If a man cannot serve justice, then he is no longer worthy of the title."

Duke knew Lucien well enough to expect this. Maddox had abused the law's power, betraying not only Riley but the very pack he was sworn to protect. Maddox owed his law degree to Riley's sacrifices—during her harshest high school years, she had worked tirelessly, winning contests and taking on extra jobs to fund his education.

But Maddox had no gratitude. Instead, he condemned Riley to five years of torment behind bars. How could he live with such guilt? How dare he walk free while Riley suffered?

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Duke quietly mourned the fate of Maddox. Crossing the powerful matriarch and Lucien was a dangerous game—and Maddox was losing.

Without hesitation, Duke set to work gathering evidence of Maddox's illegal dealings. He tapped his network, collecting proof of bribery, misconduct, and ethical breaches, funneling it swiftly to the Stormridge Pack's legal council and the broader lawyers' guild.

Under Duke's meticulous orchestration, Maddox's license was stripped away without mercy.

When the anesthetic wore off, Maddox's agonized screams echoed through the sterile hospital room as the pain from his shattered leg overwhelmed him. He writhed, desperate to escape the torment.

But the physical pain was only the beginning.

The news of his disbarment, compounded by a multi-million credit penalty for his crimes, sent his world spiraling into darkness.

Though Maddox had been practicing law for only five years, his reputation had allowed him to secure a luxurious home and a sleek car in Mooncrest, the bustling heart of the city. But with fines this steep, his savings were quickly depleted.

His assets—home, vehicle, bank accounts—would soon be seized to cover debts. After paying surgery and hospital fees, barely ten thousand credits remained on his card.

When Maddox was discharged, he was a broken man—not only in body but in spirit and fortune.

Meanwhile, within the sprawling Duskgrave estate, Riley continued her quiet recovery. The pain and betrayal of the past still haunted her nights—echoes of iron bars, bloodied memories, and whispered lies— but for the first time in years, she could glimpse a future where justice might yet be served.

The wolves of Stormridge were stirring. Retribution was in the air—and it was coming for those who had wronged her.

Lucien Duskgrave knew it too. He had watched her from afar for days, never pressing her, never demanding more than she could give. But in her silence, he saw something smoldering. Not weakness, but will. And so one morning, without warning, he appeared at her door.

“You’re healing,” he said simply, voice deep and steady. “But healing isn’t enough.”

Riley met his gaze. Her face was still pale, her frame too thin, but her eyes no longer looked like they belonged to a broken woman. They belonged to a survivor. A storm.

Lucien tossed a simple black training tunic onto the bed. “Come outside. Nyra needs to awaken.”

It had been years since she shifted freely. Since she let her white wolf rise. Five years in a silver-caged cell had robbed her of strength, blurred the bond between her human soul and Nyra’s primal one. When she closed her eyes at night, she could still feel the cold steel collar that once choked her wolf into silence.

But no more.

That morning, beneath the towering pines of Stormridge, Riley stepped barefoot into the training circle. Her limbs trembled as she fought the fear, the pain, the doubt—but when she reached inside, Nyra stirred.

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Weak, but alive.

Lucien watched in silence as her shift began. The transformation was slower than it should have been, her breath hitching, her body slick with sweat. But she didn’t give up. White fur shimmered beneath her skin. Bones cracked and reshaped. And when she finally stood before him, a shimmering white wolf with silver-tipped ears and haunted eyes—Lucien exhaled.

“Good,” he murmured. “Again.”

They trained at dawn and dusk.

Riley ran until her legs gave out. She fought Lucien's wolf, took bruises, got tossed into the dirt. Her instincts were dulled, her movements rusty—but every time she fell, she stood up again. With a snarl. With a fury that made the very earth beneath her tremble.

Nyra, once silenced and shackled, began to respond. Her eyes grew brighter. Her form more solid. Still weak—but no longer fading.

“You're getting stronger,” Lucien told her one evening, as they sat beneath the twilight sky, both panting, both bloodied.

Riley wiped a smear of dirt from her cheek. “Not strong enough.”

He tilted his head. “Not yet. But you will be.”

Because Riley knew—if she wanted revenge, if she wanted truth, if she wanted freedom—she couldn't just survive. She had to become the thing they feared most.

A white wolf reborn.

Not the Omega they discarded. Not the criminal they locked away.

But the storm they never saw coming.

And this time, she wouldn't be alone. Lucien was beside her now. Not just as her Alpha Prince, but as her ally.

## **Send Gifts**

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[ 1,498 words ]

Chapter 114

Riley's POV

Finished

After weeks of training with Lucien, I could feel the change in my body—stronger muscles, faster reflexes, and the stirring power of my wolf, Nyra, pulsing just beneath the surface of my skin.

I wasn't the same girl who had stumbled into the Duskgrave estate with hollow eyes and shackled hope. No. Now, when I looked in the mirror, I saw someone reclaiming her strength—piece by piece, claw by claw.

But there was more to healing than just fighting. I knew that. That's why, today, I wasn't training in the forest. I was at my desk, sunlight spilling through the tall windows of my room like a golden blessing, focused on a different kind of battle.

A labor of love.

The gift I was making for Matriarch Duskgrave.

She'd taken me in when I had nothing but scars—on my body, in my soul. She'd wrapped me in warmth I hadn't known in years. For the first time since my mother 'died', someone except Mia looked at me like I mattered. Not because of my bloodline or some cursed prophecy—but just because I was me.

So, I poured every ounce of that gratitude into this gift.

My fingers moved swiftly across the silk fabric, a needle held between them like a dagger. I was stitching a peony—Matriarch Duskgrave's favorite flower—into the center of a deep crimson tapestry. It wasn't just thread and silk. It was my soul in every stitch.

Nyra stirred within me as I worked, lending me calm, steady focus. She was still weak, recovering from years of suppression, but even she understood the importance of this offering. It wasn't just embroidery. It was a declaration.

A promise.

I'm not broken anymore.

Each time the needle pierced the fabric, I could feel my heartbeat steadying. I used soft rose threads for the outer petals, slowly layering in bolder shades—crimson, wine, gold—until the bloom looked almost real, like it might sigh under the weight of its own beauty.

I didn't even realize Lucien was behind me until I felt his presence like a warm shadow. He didn't speak. He never did when I worked. Just stood there, silent and watchful, the ever-patient Alpha Prince.

I didn't stop.

It wasn't until I tied off the last thread and let the needle fall with a quiet clink that I leaned back, my spine aching, my eyes burning.

A soft breath escaped my lips.

It was done.

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My own version of Glory in Bloom, inspired by a centuries-old Stormridge pattern I'd once seen in a book. I had recreated it from memory—and heart.

The scent of ink, silk, and morning sun filled the room. I rolled the tapestry gently and placed it inside the velvet-lined box Lucien had given me. Black lacquered wood, engraved with an intricate crest of the Duskgrave lineage—it looked regal, powerful. Fitting for the woman who had given me a second chance.

As I stood, my knees buckled slightly—numb from hours of stillness. I caught myself against the desk, wincing.

How long had I been working? I glanced at the window. The morning mist was beginning to lift from the mountains beyond.

Another all-nighter.

I ran a hand through my hair, tried to blink away the fatigue. The sunlight bathed my skin in warmth, chasing away the chill. I stretched slowly, each joint cracking like old wood in a storm.

And just as I stepped into the hallway, carrying the gift box in both hands, I saw a tall figure in a black suit waiting for me.

Lucien?

No—he turned, and I saw it was Duke.

Lucien's right hand. Loyal, deadly, and always watching.

I stiffened instinctively. The last time Duke had shown up without warning, someone had ended up in a hospital—or worse.

He offered me a polite nod. “Miss Riley. The preparations for the Matriarch's celebration are nearly complete. Lucien asked me to ensure your gift is placed securely in the inner vault until the banquet.”

“Thank you,” I said softly, tightening my grip on the box.

“I wasn't sure when you'd finish your embroidery,” Duke said as he stepped into the hallway, “so Alpha Lucien has already escorted the Matriarch to the banquet hall.”

I gave a small nod. Of course. A celebration that grand couldn't begin without the Duskgrave name at the forefront.

My gaze drifted to the antique clock on the drawing room wall—its gilded hands pointed at ten.

I blinked, suddenly conscious of how haggard I must look after pulling an all-nighter hunched over the tapestry. “Could I have a moment to clean myself up?” I asked, trying not to sound embarrassed. “It wouldn't be right to show up to the Matriarch's birthday like this...”

Before I could even finish the sentence, Duke snapped his fingers.

And just like that, a group of stylists swept in through the door, carrying makeup kits and garment bags like a mini army.

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“Alpha Lucien anticipated your concerns,” Duke said with a faint smirk. “He had a full styling team on standby. They’ve been instructed to have you banquet-ready in under thirty minutes. You’ll arrive before the celebration begins at eleven.”

He turned to the lead stylist, a tall, flamboyantly dressed man with a velvet choker and sculpted brows, “Andi, she’s yours.”

Andi placed a perfectly manicured hand on his hip and looked me up and down with a dramatic sigh. “Moon above... this is the one that caught Alpha Lucien’s eye? He’s all dominance and dark fury, and she’s- what is this—celery wrapped in shadows?”

I blinked, caught between a laugh and a groan.

He tutted and stepped closer, inspecting me like a disappointed art critic. “Dry skin, dull eyes, cracked lips... Sweetheart, are you sure you’re not a ghost pretending to be a girl? Even I have more feminine charm, and I’m two martinis away from challenging a rogue to a duel.”

I gave him a deadpan look. “Charmed, I’m sure.”

Duke’s jaw ticked. “Andi, if you’d like to keep this job and your tongue, I suggest you remember who you’re working for.”

Andi rolled his eyes so hard I thought they might roll out of his head. “Fine, fine. Sheesh. Everyone’s so sensitive in this pack.” He turned to me and offered a big, theatrical grin. “Let’s get you un-dead, darling.”

I caught Duke’s gaze. He gave me a quick, silent reassurance: Don’t take it personally. He hates every woman

Lucien notices.

Ah. That made more sense. He didn’t hate me, he hated the threat I posed.

That made two of us.

Andi clapped once. “Lights on. Chair ready. Time to resurrect this Luna.”

They moved like professionals—fast, efficient, precise. A makeup artist gently cleaned my face with a cotton pad, smoothing away the fatigue I didn’t even realize had settled in my bones.

Next came the foundation—light and cool against my skin—masking the shadows beneath my eyes. Concealer erased my exhaustion like a spell.

A brow pencil traced soft lines where my eyebrows had once been full of emotion but now lay dulled by grief and time. The stylist didn't change their shape, just enhanced them—bringing a sharp grace to my expression.

Soft pink and warm browns dusted my eyelids, deepening my gaze without making it harsh. My lashes were brushed until they fanned like wings, and the eyeliner traced a soft flick at the corners—subtle, but fierce.

Then came the blush. Just a touch—delicate and flushed like someone had whispered a secret against my cheek. Finally, a glossed rose tint to my lips.

Andi stepped back with a dramatic flourish. “Now we're getting somewhere.”

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He turned to the racks of gowns, humming thoughtfully, fingers fluttering over silks and satins like he was communing with them. “No, no... too mature... too brooding... ah—here.”

He held up a pale pink gown, all floating chiffon and delicate embroidery. It shimmered faintly in the light, as if it were spun from dawn itself.

“This,” he declared, “is the one. You're not a warrior tonight. You're the Alpha's star-crossed phoenix.”

The dress clung to me like moonlight—lightweight, soft, flowing with every breath I took. When I stepped in front of the mirror, I barely recognized myself.

Gone was the girl buried by shadows and silence.

In her place stood a young woman with eyes that knew pain, but also grace. Her skin glowed, her lips were soft as petals, and her body—still thin, but no longer fragile—was held like she belonged to the stars.

Andi pinned up my hair into a low chignon, leaving soft wisps curled around my ears and neck. A string of freshwater pearls settled against my collarbone, and with it, something in my chest settled too.

I looked at my reflection, and for a moment, I forgot the dungeons of Ebonclaw, the betrayal of my bloodline, the five years in chains.

I saw me.

The real me.

The one who existed before the pain, before the prison, before the lies.

“I used to smile like that,” I whispered, brushing my fingertips across my lips. “Before everything burned.”

And now, I was back.

No longer the outcast.

No longer the prey.

Lucien had given me shelter. The Matriarch had given me dignity. And I had given myself permission to rise again.

This was just a birthday banquet.

But for me?

It was war paint.

And I was ready.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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Third Person's POV

Truth be told, Riley was stunning—truly breathtaking. But the years of abuse and neglect had carved deep shadows into her soul. No matter how carefully she smiled or how still she stood, the self-doubt inside her always managed to seep through her pores, like a lingering scent of fear no shift could hide.

More than once, when the Matriarch of the Duskgrave Pack showed her kindness, Riley's expression would flicker with a haunted look. As if she wanted to say: I don't deserve this.

And anyone else—any rogue orphan or broken omega—wearing that look might've seemed pathetic. Small.

Weak.

But not Riley.

Duke, Alpha Lucien's second-in-command, had seen what she came from. Knew the scars beneath her skin. And after learning the full breadth of her story—from the betrayal of her family to the five years locked away for a crime she didn't commit—his only response was a quiet, burning ache in his chest.

She had survived.

She had clawed her way back from ruin with nothing but grit and grace.

Now, the Matriarch and Alpha Lucien had given her a place. A home. And Duke? He believed she would only rise higher from here.

He stepped forward and gave her a respectful bow, gesturing toward the door like she were royalty. His eyes, usually sharp and calculating, now held genuine warmth. A silent promise: We serve those who have survived fire.

Riley's throat tightened.

There was no mockery in his gaze. No pity. Only pride.

And that made her eyes well up, a thin sheen of emotion blurring the world around her for just a moment.

So this is what it felt like—to be protected. To be treasured.

She drew in a slow, deep breath, steadied herself, and lifted her chin with renewed confidence.

She was no longer the omega pup cowering in the Family Vale dungeon.

She was the woman Alpha Lucien had personally entrusted to the pack.

She walked toward the waiting black Lycan SUV parked just outside the manor, her long gown brushing softly against the marble floor.

Duke quickly stepped behind her, lifting the hem of her dress so it wouldn't snag or drag.

The driver stood ready beside the vehicle, white gloves immaculate, and opened the door with practiced

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elegance. He even held a hand above her head to shield her from the doorframe—an instinctive act of deference reserved only for the most honored females of the pack.

Just behind them, Andi stood at the doorway, arms crossed, his expression a whirlwind of mock jealousy and admiration.

“Little she-wolf’s got all the luck,” he muttered under his breath. “Spoiled like a Luna on her coronation day.”

Riley didn't reply. She slid into the back seat, smoothing the front of her gown. But the moment her eyes scanned the car's interior, she froze.

The inside of the vehicle was... pink.

No, not just pink—soft, fluffy, impossibly plush. It was like the interior had been doused in moon-blushed velvet.

Even the front passenger seat was wrapped in faux fur, embroidered in silver thread with the words:

“Riley’s Seat.”

And there, dangling from the rearview mirror, was a charm—a photo of her sitting in the Duskgrave sunroom, sipping tea in the afternoon light. She hadn’t even noticed someone had taken that picture.

She looked so peaceful.

So happy.

Her throat clenched as she ran her fingers lightly over the fluffy cushion beside her. It was soft, warm— exactly like the affection tucked into every thread of it.

Her thoughts flicked to another memory, darker and distant.

The first time she’d stepped into Kael’s car after being released from prison. It had reeked of his precious adopted sister—Scarlett’s perfume on every seat, her designer bags tossed casually in the back. Riley had sat there in second-hand jeans, the humiliation thick in her lungs like smoke.

Back then, she never imagined she would sit in a car that smelled like her.

Like home.

Duke, sensing her silence, turned slightly from the front seat, his tone light but sincere. “Everything you see **was** arranged by the Matriarch herself. Do you like it, Miss Riley?”

Riley’s eyes shimmered again.

Of course it hadn’t been Lucien’s doing—he was far too composed for soft—pink fluff. But the fact he allowed it, even encouraged it, spoke volumes.

“I love it,” she whispered, running her fingers along the silk-lined armrest. “It’s perfect.”

Her hands fluttered to her lap, brushing the soft fabric of the gown she wore. This was the first time in her

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life she had ever worn something so delicate, so expensive. A far cry from the threadbare dresses she used to borrow from shelters or the uniforms she wore in prison.

She no longer looked like a forgotten pup trying to survive in a world too cruel for innocence.

Now, she belonged.

Just as Riley was about to close the door, Duke turned and called toward the manor.

“Andi! Let’s go!”

Andi made a dramatic face. “Ugh, why would I willingly witness Lucien being all starry-eyed over another girl?”

Duke pinched the bridge of his nose. “You’re Miss Riley’s exclusive stylist tonight. What if her makeup smudges? Who’s going to fix it?”

Andi paused.

“Lucien specifically requested you from North City. Said he only trusted you with this job.”

That did it.

Andi practically floated toward the car. “Well, if my Lucien wants me to be there, who am I to deny him?”

He sashayed toward the vehicle, opened the front passenger door with flair-

Only for the driver to stop him with a polite but firm smile. “Apologies. That seat is reserved. You’ll need to sit in the back.”

Andi blinked, then narrowed his eyes. "Reserved for who?"

"Miss Riley," the driver said without hesitation. "The Alpha's orders."

Riley gave a soft, breathy laugh as Andi pouted and stomped dramatically into the back seat beside her.

And as the car pulled away from the Duskgrave estate, Riley turned her face toward the sunlight streaming in through the tinted window.

For the first time in years, she didn't dread what came next.

She was going to the banquet not as a servant.

Not as a prisoner.

But as someone worth watching.

And tonight, the whole pack would see it.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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Andi froze for a beat. Then he shot the driver a venomous glare before slamming the passenger door shut with an exaggerated huff. With a pout, he stomped around the car and dropped into the back seat, arms crossed and brimming with indignation.

The car rolled forward, smooth and silent as a panther, but the tension inside was palpable.

Andi kept stealing daggered glances at Riley, his nose ever so slightly wrinkled in dramatic disapproval. Riley, in turn, could only offer a helpless smile, unsure whether to laugh or sigh.

Duke cleared his throat and spoke with the authority of a Beta trying to herd a particularly unruly pup. “Andi, cut the attitude. Tonight, your only job is to protect Miss Riley’s look. She needs to be flawless. You’re the only one Alpha Lucien trusts with that.”

Andi straightened, smoothing an invisible wrinkle in his sleeve. “Of course. If I’m involved, she’ll stay radiant through a hurricane, much less a highborn feast.”

Riley couldn’t help but chuckle at his flair, the tension easing. “Thank you, Master Andi. Truly. I wouldn’t have made it through tonight without your help.”

At that, Andi’s posture softened. His lips quirked upward, though he tried to maintain his usual high—and- mighty front. “Hmph. At least you have taste. You stick to what I say, darling, and you’ll outshine every Luna—in—waiting in that banquet hall.”

Outside the tinted windows, the world blurred into streaks of silver and gold as the Duskgrave convoy sped through the city. Soon, the great black Lycan—class Rolls—Royce glided toward the Grand Celestia Hotel—the most luxurious venue in the Northern Territories.

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The vehicle shone like obsidian under the morning light, polished to perfection, its family crest of the Duskgrave Pack etched into its side in shimmering silver.

The moment the car halted at the entrance, attention shifted.

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The air rippled with interest as heads turned. Alphas, Betas, and highborn daughters of noble packs paused mid—conversation to watch.

The driver exited first, his motions crisp and respectful, opening the rear door with a smooth, trained hand.

First to emerge was Andi, who stepped out with all the theatrical grace of a purebred show wolf. His hips swayed, his eyes glittered, and he clearly reveled in the stolen glances from passersby.

But the main event had yet to appear.

Duke rounded the vehicle with elegant precision and extended his arm, posture perfect, his bearing that of a warrior—escort assigned to royalty.

A pale, slender hand emerged from the car, and the murmurs around the entrance silenced instantly. Every breath stilled.

Then Riley stepped out.

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And it was as if the moon herself had descended.

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Golden sunlight bathed her figure, gilding the delicate tendrils of hair that framed her face. Her long gown shimmered like morning mist over rose petals—soft, ethereal, and achingly graceful. The sheer layers of the dress fluttered with each breath of wind, trailing behind her like a living aura.

Her every step was elegance—neither rushed nor hesitant, but purposeful and poised, a she-wolf raised from ashes to stand among kings.

Her brows were smooth arches of dusk, her eyes luminous pools that held both tragedy and resilience. Her lips, touched with the hue of wild roses, curled into the barest smile—enough to steal hearts and silence.

scorn.

Gasps rippled through the gathering crowd.

Not a single whisper stirred the air.

The banquet entrance, moments ago alive with chatter and prideful boasts, now hushed under the sheer force of her presence.

Even the pack guards at the hotel entrance bowed their heads slightly—not because they had to, but because something primal in them demanded it.

The driver bent swiftly, lifting the hem of her gown to protect it from the stone steps. Behind her, Andi preened with pride, as if her transformation were the greatest masterpiece of his career.

All eyes followed as the group began to ascend the steps toward the grand hall.

But not all gazes were warm.

Among the crowd stood members of the Family Vale. Alaric Vale—Riley's father—stood frozen, disbelief and fury twisting across his aging features.

He hadn't expected her.

Not here. Not like this.

Not radiant, not proud, not powerful.

His jaw clenched, rage seething behind his narrowed eyes. That cursed little mutt. He had tried to throw her to the wolves—literally and figuratively—and somehow, she had survived. Worse, she had risen.

Dressed like a Luna. Standing beside the Duskgrave heir's Beta. The Matriarch's personal car.

It was unforgivable.

She'd defied the fate he wrote for her—and now dared to steal the spotlight on the most important night in the Northern Pack calendar.

Whore, he thought viciously. She wants more than Lucien. She wants a place at the top. She wants all of them. Every highborn name. Every powerful male in the room. She's here to seduce and claw her way into the bloodline.

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Beside him, his wife's expression was more complicated.

Zara Vale frowned, arms crossed tightly. She felt no joy at seeing her daughter looking so well. No pride. Only bitterness.

Since Riley had vanished, their precious son Kael had fallen apart. Booze, fights, and humiliation became his norm. Zara had spent sleepless nights worrying—for him.

Not for the daughter she'd cast away.

And now, to see Riley reemerge not in chains but in silk, adorned in jewels and glory, was too much.

Before anyone could stop her, Zara stalked forward—shoving through the gathered nobles—and raised her hand in a high arc.

With a snarl, she struck.

A sharp crack echoed at the entrance.

Gasps followed.

“Riley Vale!” Zara screamed, voice sharp and venom-laced. “You ungrateful little witch! We’ve suffered while you waltz around like royalty! Your brother nearly died because of you!”

For a heartbeat, silence stretched, taut and electric.

## **Send Gifts**

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[ 980 words ]

Chapter 117

Riley's POV

The slap came with wind.

Sharp. Swift. Cruel.

Zara wasn't holding back. Not a shred of shame, not even with half the Northern Pack elite standing around us. She intended to strike me down in front of them all—to remind everyone that in her eyes, I was nothing more than a disobedient, ungrateful mutt.

The air thickened as a collective gasp rippled through the crowd. I could feel every gaze sharpen, every breath held in anticipation of the blow.

But it never landed.

Duke's hand caught hers mid-air with a strength that rattled the bones in her wrist. And before anyone could process what was happening, he flung her arm aside with enough force to send her stumbling back. several steps.

The sound of her heels scuffing against the stone echoed like a warning shot.

Somewhere in the crowd, someone gasped again. Another murmured, "She touched the Duskgrave escort?" The implication lingered unspoken: She tried to strike Lucien's chosen guest?

Zara caught herself just before she hit the ground. Her face, once flawless under layers of powdered pride, now flushed with burning humiliation. Her eyes—those eyes that never held warmth for me—stared at me in disbelief, as though I'd just betrayed her in the cruelest way possible.

But I wasn't the one who'd betrayed anyone.

My gaze found hers—calm, cool, and utterly detached.

No fear. No pleading. No ache for her approval.

She wasn't my mother anymore. She was just another threat in a world full of them. Another wolf who tried to cage me, then cried when I learned to bite back.

I watched her flinch under my stare.

She'd expected me to crumble. To cry. Maybe even to fall to my knees like the obedient daughter she thought I still was.

But I didn't flinch.

And that terrified her more than anything.

11

Her voice wavered, trembling like a thread about to snap. "Riley... how—how could you let him lay hands on me? I'm your mother!"

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Chapter 117

A humorless smile curled my lips. Cold. Precise. Like the edge of a knife sliding across old wounds.

Finished

“Oh? So you do remember you’re my mother,” I said, voice soft as winter frost. “Interesting. Because I don’t recall any mother who greets her daughter with a slap to the face at her first public appearance in months.”

I tilted my head slightly, eyes never leaving hers.

“Or perhaps... was that your idea of a gift? A warm maternal gesture, Vale-style?”

Gasps and whispers rose like static in the air.

Zara’s face paled. I didn’t stop.

“If that’s the kind of love you’re offering, might I suggest you reserve it for your real daughter—Scarlett?” I said smoothly. “I’m sure she’d be honored to be slapped senseless in front of half the Northern Territory.”

The laughter was quiet at first—muffled, awkward. But it spread. I heard one Luna whisper something behind her fan. I didn’t care.

I stood taller.

I let them see me.

Let them see the she-wolf who refused to bow to the blood that tried to bury her.

Zara’s face went red, then white, then a mottled flush of rage. “I—I only struck you because I care! You ran off without a word! You could’ve died out there! And now you show up looking like a—like a—”

She gestured to my gown with disgust, spitting the next word like it poisoned her tongue.

“Like a courtesan! Wearing clothes worth more than your life! Where did you get them? Did you sell yourself to buy that dress? Is that how you survived this past month?”

My jaw clenched.

She wasn't even trying to hide the accusation.

The gasps grew louder now, a few growls curling through the audience—some scandalized, some just hungry for blood.

“You're my daughter,” she sneered. “I have every right to correct you if you've lost your shame.”

Every word she threw dripped like venom—and I could feel the fury coil in my chest like a beast begging to be unleashed.

I took a slow step forward.

Then another.

Her mouth moved, but I was no longer listening. My wolf—Nyra—stirred inside me, quiet but seething.

“Concern?” I echoed with a scoff. “Zara Vale, don't insult me. You've never lost a night of sleep over me. The

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Finished

Chapter 117

only time I ever heard you speak my name was when you were blaming me for something Scarlett did.”

“You beat me. Starved me. Locked me away when I didn’t obey. You let them throw me in a cell without asking a single question.”

“And now that I’m not crawling back with dirt under my nails and fear in my eyes, now you care?”

I shook my head, slowly.

“I don’t need your guilt. And I certainly don’t need your slaps.”

Zara staggered back like I’d struck her.

But I wasn’t done.

“I’m not the same girl you pushed into the shadows. I don’t need your approval to exist. I don’t need your name. I have my own. Riley of the Ebonclaw Pack. Daughter of no one. Survivor of all.”

That silence? It came again. Sharper. Deeper. Reverent.

Then-

Alaric Vale’s voice sliced through it like a dagger. Harsh. Mocking.

“You arrogant little mutt.”

I turned slowly to face him.

He stood behind Zara, face twisted with contempt, lips curled in a sneer so familiar it made my wolf bristle.

“I should’ve left you in that orphanage to rot. You were a mistake from the beginning. And now, look at you -parading around like some highborn bitch in heat, desperate to catch a mate at the feast. You think a silk dress makes you worthy?”

I didn’t move.

“I don’t care how many gowns you wear. You’ll always be filth,” he spat. “And if you think I’m going to stand here and let you shame the Vale name at the Duskgrave Matriarch’s birthday, you’re out of your cursed mind.”

“You ungrateful wretch. I took you in when no one else would. And this—this is how you repay me?”

Every word was a slap.

But I didn't bleed anymore.

I let the rage in his voice wash over me like a cold wave, and when it passed, I was still standing.

Still smiling.

And no longer afraid.

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[ 808 words ]

Chapter 118

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Third Person's POV

A wave of murmurs surged through the gathered crowd like wildfire, every whisper laced with disdain as their eyes darted to Riley Vale.

The pack wolves, the ranked Alphas, the Lunas, and elders—none of them even tried to hide their judgment. Their sharp gazes flicked between Riley and her kneeling parents, as though weighing blood ties against honor.

And for once, honor was winning.

Alaric Vale saw it. He felt it.

And for a second—just a second—he reveled in it.

You little bitch, his eyes seemed to say. I raised you. I named you. And I'll break you right here.

“Too long have I tolerated your shamelessness,” Alaric hissed, his voice dark and venomous as he stepped forward. “A disobedient pup shames the Alpha. And today—” he raised his hand, a broad, calloused thing laced with violence “—I'll teach you what it means to defy your blood.”

Zara moved too, rushing toward Riley, her movements frantic and unhinged. “Riley, don’t be foolish! Stop humiliating us like this! Come here and-!”

But neither of them reached her.

Before their feet could cross the final distance, two shadows moved faster than any of them could react.

With a grunt and a pair of dull thuds, both Alaric and Zara were sent flying to the ground—Alaric by Duke’s boot to the chest, Zara by the sharp strike of the driver’s foot hooking behind her knees.

The crowd gasped as the two elder Vales crumpled to the marble like sacks of old grain.

Zara tried to rise first—only for the Duskgrave Estate’s elite security to rush forward, pinning them both to the floor in seconds. Alaric snarled like a cornered beast, veins bulging along his neck, his face a flushed mask of shame and fury.

“I am the Patriarch of the Vale family! I sit on the Alpha Council! You will regret this insult!”

His voice roared through the hotel foyer, but it echoed hollow.

No one moved to help him.

Riley stood a few paces away, her posture regal, chin lifted. Her expression didn’t waver—not even as Zara began to cry.

Tears streamed down the woman’s face, smearing what little grace she had left.

“Riley, please... we’re your parents! You’re just going to stand there and let these savages treat us like this?”

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Finished

Chapter 118

That word again—parents.

So convenient now. So fragile on her tongue.

Riley's eyes narrowed. Memories surged up like shadows—cold meals, locked doors, Scarlett's smug smirk as Riley was dragged away in chains, the bloody knuckles she wore after each prison fight.

"You only remember you're my parents when I'm useful," she said coldly, voice calm, but cutting. "Where was this concern when I was locked in that rogue cell for a crime I didn't commit? When I came home to broken ribs and blood on my sheets, and you told the pack doctor to say nothing?"

Zara whimpered. Alaric growled.

"And now that I have power—now that I've found a place where I'm valued—suddenly I'm your daughter again?"

Her gaze dropped to the sight before her: the proud Alpha couple of Vale Pack, pressed to the polished marble floor like beaten dogs.

There was no pity in her heart.

Only satisfaction.

She turned slightly. "Duke," she said quietly, "did Lucien send them an invitation?"

Duke straightened beside her, his face carved in steel. "No, Miss Riley. Their names were not on the list."

She gave a soft hum. "Then why are they here?"

His eyes flicked to the head of security. "Explain. Now."

The guard captain paled. Beads of sweat formed instantly on his brow. "I—I'm terribly sorry, Miss Riley. I must've... I didn't realize they weren't on the official- I'll remove them immediately!"

But before he could bark the order, Lucien's driver stepped forward, calm and composed as ever.

"There's a service alley behind the cast wing," the man said coolly, not even looking at the Vales. "Drag them there."

The captain blinked. "Sir, the—what?"

The driver's gaze turned cold. Sharp. Predatory.

“Drag them to the alley,” he repeated. “And break their knees. Both of them. I don’t want the Vales wandering into places they don’t belong again.”

The hotel went silent. Even the chandeliers seemed to stop swaying.

The captain’s lips parted. “B–break their...?”

“They weren’t invited,” the driver said flatly. “They attacked a marked guest of the Duskgrave heir. That is not just disrespect. That is pack treason.”

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Chapter 118

No one dared argue.

The Vale name had weight. But the Duskgrave name was law.

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The security team didn’t need to be told again. They clamped muzzles over Alaric and Zara’s mouths to muffle the screaming and began dragging them across the tiled floor toward the service entrance..

Alaric thrashed. Zara cried. Their eyes were wild with disbelief, fury—and fear.

And Riley?

She simply watched.

For once in her life, she was no longer the girl on the ground begging for mercy.

She was the one standing tall while her abusers crawled.

Somewhere behind her, she heard Andy whistle low. “Damn, girl. That’s what I call justice.”

Riley didn’t smile.

But her wolf did.

## Send Gifts

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[ 656 words ]

Chapter 119

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The driver stood at the mouth of the alley, unmoved by the lingering stench of blood or the echo of broken bones behind him. He lit a cigarette, his eyes cold, his heartbeat steady—as if scenes like this were nothing more than routine.

By the time the cigarette burned down to the filter, the screaming had stopped.

The head of the Silverfang's security unit approached cautiously, bloodstained and breathless, his hand trembling slightly as he tossed away the bloodied steel rod he'd used.

"It's done." he murmured.

The driver nodded once, calmly flicked the butt of his cigarette to the ground, and ground it beneath his boot.

"Good," he said, clapping the man on the shoulder. "Then I'll pretend you never let two traitors from the Ebonclaw Pack into the Matriarch's birthday gala."

The security captain forced out a shaky laugh. "Won't happen again. I'll double-check every guest list from

now on."

The driver didn't smile. He just stared—cold and sharp, like a blade held to the throat.

"You know Lucien Duskgrave hates having loose ends," he said quietly. "Or letting anyone hold leverage over his bloodline."

The captain's face paled instantly. "Y—yes. I'll erase every recording. Surveillance, street cams, alley feeds- I'll wipe the blood, too."

Satisfied, the driver waved him off. "Do it."

Moments later, two broken bodies were dragged out of the shadows—Alaric and Zara Vale. The so-called patriarch and Luna of the disgraced Ebonclaw Pack. Blood stained the stone beneath them, trailing behind their limp forms like a red river.

The driver watched with a thin smile.

For what you did to Riley Vale—her broken legs, her broken heart—this is only the beginning.

Meanwhile, a luxury wolf-hide-lined car glided toward Mooncrest. Inside sat two women of striking

contrast.

The first wore blood-red silk and carried herself like a queen. Her figure was sensual and her beauty sharp as a blade. Years hadn't dulled her appeal—instead, she wore age like armor. One glance was enough to mark her as a Luna of influence and wealth.

Beside her sat Scarlett Vale. Her white dress clung delicately to her figure, her dark hair styled into an elegant knot. She radiated a false innocence—like a poisonous flower hiding beneath snowy petals.

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Chapter 119

She had spent the last month embedded in Northhaven, gathering intel. Her target: Lucien Duskgrave, the Alpha Prince of the Stormridge Pack.

The rumors were wild. That he was cursed. That no woman could please him. That he was dangerous beyond reason.

Scarlett had her doubts.

But the truth was far more complicated—and infinitely more dangerous.

Lucien Duskgrave wasn't some broken heir. He was divine, in the terrifying way only Alpha royalty could be. Cursed, yes—but not crippled. His fate was tied to an ancient bloodline hex:

Until his fated mate loved him first, he would remain forever unbonded,

It was a cruel twist. One that prevented him from claiming by dominance or lust. Love had to come from the other side first.

Lucien had learned to weaponize the curse.

Long ago, a she-wolf—his childhood friend—spread whispers that he was... lacking. That he was impotent. That no woman survived his bed unscathed.

Lucien didn't correct the rumors.

He let them spread like wildfire, because for the first time in his life, the obsessive flocks stopped.

But when she crossed a line—when the rumors touched his name too deeply—he ended her.

Within weeks, her family's empire crumbled. Their ancestral lands were sold. She was cast out of the Northern packs and sent into exile, forced to live among rogues in the eastern desolation.

Last anyone heard, she was living on scraps. Depressed. Forgotten.

And now?

No wolf dared mention her name.

Scarlett licked her lips at the thought. She wasn't afraid of Lucien. No, she wanted him.

That other she-wolf was a fool.

Lucien didn't need resistance. He needed submission.

She would be the perfect Luna—not because she'd challenge him, but because she'd give him what he wanted:

Obedience. Softness. Control.

Scarlett smiled, leaning into the leather seat of the car, the wind from the Mooncrest highway whispering

past.

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Chapter 119

Lucien Duskgrave was a weapon.

And she?

She planned to sheath him.

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[ 751 words ]

Chapter 120

Scarlett Vale never doubted her charm.

To her, men were puzzles—and she always held the final piece.

Lucien Duskgrave would be no different.

She had conquered Maddox.

She had bent Ronan Duskcliff to her will.

And now, she would make the Alpha Prince of the Stormridge Pack fall at her feet—just like the rest.

No man had ever resisted her for long. Certainly not one cursed by fate.

Scarlett cast a sidelong glance at the regal woman seated beside her in the luxury car. Clad in crimson velvet, with raven—black waves cascading down her shoulders and a golden lupine crest glinting at her throat, Lady Seraphina Duskgrave was the image of High Luna elegance—refined, authoritative, and cold as polished obsidian.

The world believed she was Lucien’s mother.

Scarlett believed it too.

In truth, Seraphina was his stepmother. And though she wore the Duskgrave name with pride, she bore no love for the bastard prince her husband had fathered before their union.

Lucien was a reminder of the one stain on her otherwise flawless lineage—a boy born of another she—wolf, fated by the Moon Goddess herself, and more beloved by the aging Alpha King than she could ever accept.

But Scarlett Vale? She didn’t know any of this. Not yet.

To her, Seraphina was a gateway. And she knew how to open gates.

She smiled sweetly, all softness and sunshine. “Lady Seraphina, why did you leave Stormridge so suddenly and come all the way to Mooncrest? We were having so much fun in the North.”

She used her title with respect—but not too much. A calculated closeness. Familiar, but not overreaching.

From the moment Scarlett met her, she had crafted the perfect role: the charming, unthreatening southern pup with wide eyes and silken praise.

And Seraphina had let her play it.

Scarlett remembered their first meeting—how she’d gasped in admiration, eyes sparkling like a pup seeing her first full moon. “Your skin’s unreal, your posture, your power... You walk like royalty. If I didn’t know better, I’d think you were the Moon Matron herself.”

Flattery—expertly dosed.

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Chapter 120

And Seraphina, who was surrounded by wolves that feared her more than adored her, had found it... amusing.

Now, Seraphina's crimson lips curved slightly. "My mother-in-law's birthday. The old matron turns eighty today. I came out of duty."

Scarlett widened her eyes with feigned surprise. "What? You're married? Gods, I was about to introduce you to my brother. He's going to be devastated when he hears Stormridge's most beautiful she-wolf is already claimed."

A ghost of laughter escaped Seraphina's throat. "You truly think I look young enough to be unmarried?"

Scarlett tilted her head and pouted. "You don't look a day over thirty, I swear. I'm twenty-three—you couldn't be more than three or four years older."

Seraphina let out a soft exhale. Not quite a laugh. More like a breath caught between indulgence and

weariness.

"Scarlett, there's something you should know."

Scarlett leaned in eagerly. "What is it?"

"I'm forty-eight. I married into the Duskgrave."

Scarlett's eyes widened in dramatized disbelief. "No way. If you're forty-eight, then I must be a century old."

Seraphina's gaze drifted out the window for a brief moment—toward the distant tree line of Mooncrest, where the estate loomed like a shadowed fortress. "I've had many years to learn the art of appearances."

Scarlett clutched Seraphina's arm. "You have to teach me your secrets. If I can age like you, I'll have Alphas fighting duels over me until I'm ninety."

Seraphina gave her a long, unreadable look. Her smile was polite, but her eyes held something else—calculating. Cold. Amused.

She knew what Scarlett was doing.

And she wasn't stopping her.

"You're a clever girl," Seraphina said quietly. "But cleverness isn't everything in the North. You'd do well to remember that."

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Scarlett blinked, momentarily thrown. "Of course, Lady Seraphina. I'm only trying to learn from the best."

She tucked herself closer, resting her head lightly against the woman's shoulder with practiced familiarity. "Still, I meant it. You're radiant. I hope one day I can carry myself the way you do."

Seraphina didn't respond.

Her thoughts were already drifting elsewhere—to Lucien. The cursed prince. The one she had never called

son.

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Chapter 120

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He'd grown into a powerful Alpha, feared and desired across the continent. But to Seraphina, he was always the obstacle. The reminder that no matter how many titles she wore, the bloodline would never be hers.

And now this pretty little Southern fox was circling him, wagging her tail and calling her sister?

Seraphina smirked to herself.

Let her try.

Scarlett Vale might think herself a clever player.

But Seraphina Duskgrave had buried more ambitious wolves than this one—without ever breaking a nail.

### **Send Gifts**

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## **- in Vengeance 121**

[ 881 words ]

**Seraphina** Duskgrave's greatest regret in life was not bearing a child for the Duskgrave bloodline.

Not because she lacked the **strength**, or the devotion, or the lineage.

But because the Moon Goddess had taken that ability from her—violently, and without mercy.

+8 Pearls

Her expression darkened as the memory surfaced like rot under her flawless skin. If her **child** had survived that night, they would have been in their twenties now—strong, beautiful, heir to everything.

But all of it had been stolen.

Stolen by that bastard, Lucien.

A flicker of **raw** hatred flared in her eyes. No one in the backseat noticed, but the scent of her fury—bitter iron and scorched roses—was impossible for any wolf to miss.

It had been his mother who cursed her womb. His mother who, in a fit of defiance and dark magic, had caused her miscarriage and left her barren. And now that damned child **had** grown into the heir of Stormridge. The entire Duskgrave empire—every silver-marked crest, every blood-forged alliance—was in his hands.

Not hers. Not her future son's.

And worst of all? There was nothing she could **do** about it.

She could only smile through her perfect teeth and watch as that cursed mutt inherited **the** world she had fought for.

Her knuckles whitened **as** her **mind** turned to another betrayal—one far more recent.

She had seen the message just three nights ago. A photo, forwarded by her mother-in-law, Matriarch Duskgrave, to her

husband.

A girl.

**Young.** Delicate. The kind of soft-faced vixen old wolves thought could soothe broken dy

And her **husband's** reply!

She's promising. If Mother approves, I have no objection."

Seraphina nearly shredded the phone with her claws.

They **hadn't** even divorced her yet. And already, they were shopping for replacements. Disgust twisted her features.

No one—no girl, no **matriarch**, no cursed heir—was going to push her out of the Duskgrave **estate**. She had fought tooth and claw to become the **Luna** of Stormridge. She'd driven Lucien's mother to **madness, manipulated courts**, buried secrets. No one would take that from her.

**Not** while she still drew breath

Scarlett Vale, sitting beside her, felt the shift in Seraphina's energy. The older woman had gone still—too still. Her eyes. weren't just **distant**, they were burning **with something** Scarlett **couldn't** name.

She immediately stopped speaking.

Smart girl. Seraplana thought bitterly. But still so very naive.

The luxury car came to a smooth halt before the Mooncrest **Grand** Hotel

Scarlet and Seraphina **stepped** out, both **graceful**, poised—expecting eyes to turn toward them. Expecting admiration. Deference

Instead, the hotel staff barely blinked.

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Chapter 121

Guests hurried past. A few gave a quick glance. No one bowed. No one whispered in awe. The silence was deafening.

-8 Pearls

Scarlett's practiced smile faltered for half a second. But she recovered quickly, adjusting the hem of her gown **and** tucking herself beside Seraphina once more.

Seraphina, however, was seething.

In Stormridge, she was a queen. Wherever she walked, wolves dropped their gazes and offered their throats. But here in Mooncrest? Nothing. Not even a growl of respect.

Of course, she didn't know what had happened just an hour earlier.

That the entire venue had already been shaken by another she-wolf's arrival—Riley Vale, daughter of the disgraced Ebonclaw Pack, whose emergence had left a trail of stunned whispers and bared throats in her wake..

Next to **that** storm. Seraphina and Scarlett were a quiet drizzle.

But Seraphina straightened her spine, adjusted her blood-red shawl, and stepped forward. Let them ignore her for now. Once she was **inside**, once they knew who she was, they would come crawling

She had seen it happen a thousand times.

They approached the entrance—but stopped short.

**A** commotion at the **door**.

A tall male wolf **in** a tailored black suit stood just beyond the threshold. his sharp features twisted in irritation.

Ronan Duskcliff, **Alpha** of the southernmost Blackmaw Pack, heir to the Duskcliff **name** and Lucien's long-standing rival.

The security captain stood firmly between him and the entrance. "Apologies, Alpha Ronan. Without a formal invitation, I cannot allow entry."

The security officer, a seasoned beta with scars on his jaw, looked nervous but resolute. He'd already been reprimanded for letting in unregistered guests once today. If he made the same mistake again—especially with someone from the Duskcliff family—he might not survive the week.

Ronan's tone dropped, low and dangerous. "Name your price."

The officer shook his **head**, sweat **starting** to form along his temples. "Sir, this **isn't** about coin. It's the rule of the House."

With a growl, **Ronan** reached into his coat and pulled out a check. "One million credits," he said, tossing it at the guard's

chest "Now move."

The **man** caught it instinctively, glanced down—**and** then crumpled it in his fist.

"No."

The growl that escaped **Ronan's** throat made two omegas nearby flinch. "Don't push me."

The officer squared his shoulders. "With all due respect, Alpha, the **Duskgrave Pack** doesn't **take** bribes. **And** if I let you in without clearance. I won't live to spend that money."

Ronan's jaw tensed. **His nostrils flared.**

Scarlett watched the scene unfold, her interest piqued. She **knew** Ronan well. Knew **his** rage, his pride.

And she knew exactly what this was really about.

This wasn't about the party. It never was

about the crown The Pack. The blood feud

And Ronan had come to draw first blood—in public

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Chapter 121

Seraphina remained silent, her expression **unreadable**. But beneath the surface, her satisfaction simmered.

Let the cursed boy deal with this mess.

Let the bastards tear each other apart.

She would **watch**. And when the time came, she would pick the bones clean.

**Send Gifts**

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[ 817 words ]

Ronan Duskcliff had never been denied entry anywhere in his life.

+8 Pearls

And yet here he was, standing at the edge of the Mooncrest Grand Hotel's gala hall, blocked by a glorified Beta with a clipboard **and** far too much self-importance.

His expression was storm-dark. The muscles in his jaw ticked dangerously.

**This wasn't** just any night. This was the Stormridge Matriarch's eightieth year.

Every key figure in the werewolf world was inside that room. Investors. Alphas. Elders. Kingmakers.

And Ronan needed them..

The Duskcliff Pack had been hemorrhaging alliances for months. Stock value plummeting. Old partners backing out.

He needed to **mend** the cracks—and tonight was the perfect chance. If he could charm Lady Duskgrave, maybe even strike at deal for the Eastern Wastelands redevelopment, he could stop the bleeding.

He had to get inside.

But **no** matter **how many** credits he waved or how **low** his voice dropped, the security wolf didn't budge.

**Then**, a **familiar** voice drifted toward him like lavender smoke.

“Brother Ronan?”

He turned, startled.

Scarlett Vale stood a few paces away, arm linked with a strikingly regal she-wolf in deep crimson silk—Lady Seraphina Duskgrave herself.

Ronan blinked, “Scarlett? What are you doing here?”

The young she-wolf gave **him** a sweet, practiced smile. “I'm here with my dearest friend. Her mother-in-law is the guest of

honor tonight.”

She turned, playfully tugging on Seraphina's sleeve. "Dearest, you're the **Alpha** Prince's **wife**. **Can't** you help my poor **brother**

Brother? The guard's ears twitched. **That** word **again**. Too **casual**. Too intimate.

Seraphina, ever the performer, smiled coldly. "The Matriarch is my **mother**—in—law. You're blocking her **bloodline**."

The **Beta's** face shifted from defiance to alarm. "Apologies, Lady Seraphina! I didn't realize—of course, I didn't mean any disrespect. But I do still need to **confirm**—

She didn't let **him** finish.

From her clutch, she produced a shimmering gold—embossed invitation—the unmistakable mark of a direct Duskgrave heir.

Most wolves had simple crimson parchments. Cold was for the bloodline.

The **guard** bowed deeply, inspecting the seal, then stepping aside. "My deepest **apologies**, Lady Duskgrave. Please, **come** in"

Seraphina raised her chin with cool elegance. "They're both my guests. They enter with

There was a flicker of hesitation in the Beta's eyes—but he nodded. "Of course

And just like **that**, Konan was in

They stepped through the arched doors into the grand ballroom—**and** were instantly swallowed by a **sea** of golden light and murmuring voices

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Chapter 122

+8 Pearls

A massive crystal chandelier cast **halos** across the marble floor. She wolves in flowing gowns moved like colored flames between silk—draped tables. The **air** was thick with perfume and pheromones—power, beauty, and the unmistakable tension of a thousand hidden agendas.

Ronan's eyes scanned the room. His **Alpha** instincts kicked in—sizing up rivals, sniffing our opportunity.

He spotted a few key investors from the Western Dominion, and with a brief nod to Scarlett **and** Seraphina, **moved away** to

**engage.**

Scarlett watched him go without a word. Her focus was elsewhere.

She was searching for him.

Lucien

Her breath hitched slightly. That was the only reason she had come tonight..

Not for the Matriarch. Not for some “celebration.” She wanted to stand beside Lucien Duskgrave—no, she wanted to **own** that space beside him.

But the ballroom was too full. Too loud. **And** he was nowhere to be seen.

Her heart, once light with anticipation, now sank with unease.

Why isn't he here?

She excused herself from Seraphina with a soft, “I'll just freshen up, and slipped out of the ballroom.

The corridor outside the banquet hall **was** quiet, gilded with antique sconces and lined with dark oak doors. Scarlett lingered near the restrooms, hoping he might pass by.

**Ten** minutes. Nothing

So she drifted toward the upper level, **where** the private lounges and guest suites were reserved for direct descendants and inner-circle guests.

**Just** as she turned the corner—she froze

From the end of the corridor, a door creaked open.

And out stepped Piley Vale.

Scarlett's **breath** caught in her **throat**.

She hadn't seen her in days.

And yet, there she stood, bathed in soft gold light, dressed in a gown so ethereal it looked conjured from moonlight.

The pink chiffon fluttered around her in layered waves, like clouds dyed in dawn. Her **skin**, fair **and** luminous, held the faintest rosy

flush. Her lips, painted a soft cherry red, curved with serene detachment. Loose **tendrils framed** her face, caught against a **tiara** of pale silver and crystal thorns.

Scarlett stood stunned.

Riley looked **like** a princess **from** an ancient prophecy. No—worse. She looked like something meant **to** be worshiped.

Behind her, a well-dressed male attendant—likely a steward or escort—was carefully adjusting her **train**.

The contrast **was** unbearable

Scarlett's jaw tightened.

What the hell is she doing here?

And why does she look **like** that?

343 PMP P.

Chapter 122

+8

A Pearls

Riley met her gaze briefly. Cool Unmoved. A slight arch of her brow the only acknowledgment.

Then, without a word, she turned and descended the **stairs** toward the ballroom.

Scarlett remained frozen in place, heart pounding **with** something between rage and dread.

She had come here to **shine**. To capture Lucien's attention.

But now, a ghost from the **past** had returned—wrapped in silks and power—and threatened to steal the entire night.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 740 words ]

Chapter 123

+B Pearls

The moment Scarlett Vale laid eyes on Riley descending the hallway, her blood surged with fury.

She hated seeing her like **this**—ethereal, glowing, untouchable.

Everything about Riley tonight **was** flawless, her luminous **skin**, the soft waves of her pale hair, the layered gown of blush silk that caught the corridor's light like **moonlit mist**. A living daydream.

Scarlett's **nails** curled into her palm.

Riley **had** inherited every advantage—beauty, bloodline, and now, in her presence..

And she had tried everything to ruin her.

To humiliate **her**. To erase **her**. To **shred** her face and strip her pride.

**And** yet here Riley stood. Untouched. Radiant,

As if five years in a prison cell had done nothing but sharpen her into something more dangerous,

Scarlett's lips curled with spite. She's here for Lucien, she thought. That must be **it**

The idea made her stomach churn.

Riley cast her a single glance—brief, expressionless. Then looked away as though Scarlett was nothing but a dust mote.

No sneer. No retort. No recognition.

That indifference was worse **than** contempt.

Riley tightened her grip on **the velvet**—wrapped gift box in her hands and turned to her companion. "Let's go, **Andy**"

Scarlett's rage ignited.

How dare she ignore her. Like the past never happened. Like Scarlett was the one **who** didn't belong here.

She waited until Riley's footsteps drew closer, then let her mask drop.

The corridor **was** e

empty. Perfect.

Her voice cut through the silence, sharp and **poisonous**.

"Well, well Dressing like a Luna already, are we?"

Riley didn't stop

Scarlett's voice pose

"Whoring yourself **out** at a Matriarch's birthday party, hoping some **Alpha** will forget **your** prison **record**? You might fool strangers Kiley, but we know what you really are"

Her words echoed through the hallway like a slap

But Riley didn't flinch

Scarlett's breath came faster She **wanted** a reaction. Needed one

Biley's silence was unbearable.

This wasn't how it was supposed to go.

She was supposed to scream Cry Break down Just like always

Chapter 123

+8 Pearls

Just like when the family would turn on her. When Scarlett played innocent, **and** the others shielded her like a wounded pup.

But Riley had changed. She **wasn't** playing that game anymore.

Scarlett snapped.

With a snarl, she lunged forward and yanked Riley by the hair.

“You think you’re better than me now??” she screeched, her claws digging toward Riley’s scalp. “Let me remind you what really are—nothing but a stain on the **Vale** name!”

**you**

**Riley** staggered, caught off **guard**, but didn’t cry out. Her fingers went instantly to Scarlett’s wrist, trying to break the grip.

“Let her go!” Andy shrieked.

The petite Beta launched forward, grabbing a fistful of Scarlett’s curls and yanking them back with all **his** strength. “You absolute lunatic! She’s the **Luna’s** guest, not your chew toy!”

Scarlett screamed in pain and released Riley, stumbling backward.

At that exact moment, a male voice thundered from down the corridor.

“What the hell is going on here?”

All three turned.

Ronan Duskcliff stood like a storm at the end of the hall—tall, broad—shouldered, his Alpha aura pulsing in **waves** of restrained violence.

Andy blinked. His anger dissolved instantly into girlish awe.

Good gods. **That man was** carved from marble and dipped in danger.

He immediately let **go** of Scarlett’s **hair**, smoothing down his sleeves and trying **not** to stare.

Scarlett’s eyes brimmed with tears **the** moment she recognized Ronan’s voice.

In a heartbeat, she switched gears—from fury to fragility.

“Ronan,” she whimpered, staggering toward **him** like a frightened doe, “I didn’t mean to—I was just trying to talk to her, and she got so angry—I think I ruined her hair and she...”

Her voice cracked, and tears spilled like a broken dam. She threw Riley a trembling glance of fear. “Please don’t be mad at Der It **was** my fault 1-1 **was** too loud ”

Haley narrowed her eyes

Classic Scarlett

**Konan** frowned His gaze flicked from Scarlett's tears to Kiley's unbothered calm, and his jaw clenched.

**You** went too far. Miley" he **said** coldly "This is **a family** event. What the hell were you thinking?"

Andy's mouth fell open

What

"You have got to be **joking**" he snapped "She was the one who attacked us! Pulled her **hair** like some feral wolf! **And** now you're blaming Riley?"

**Ronan** eyes slid to Andy with **disdain**. "This isn't your pack. Stay out of it."

Then he turned back to Riley His tone dropped, sharp and commanding

"Apologize to Scarlet"

Chapter 123

Andy took a step forward, fists clenched. "You arrogant-!"

**But** Riley raised a hand, Calm. Controlled.

-No," she said quietly

Ronan's eyes darkened. "No?"

Riley met **his** gaze, steady and sharp.

+8 Pearls

You **came** in halfway through a scene and assumed the ending. If you want to talk about honor, Alpha Duskcliff, perhaps learn what actually happened first."

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 781 words ]

## Chapter 124

Ronan Duskcliff's gaze was laced with **primal** dominance as it pinned **Riley** Vale to the wall.

→ +8 Pearls

His eyes—cold, calculated, and merciless—burned into her like she was not a person, but territory. Something he **had** marked once, and now **had** returned to **reclaim**.

“You’ve bullied Scarlett before,” he said lowly, each word like ice splintering into her skin. “Don’t act innocent in front of me, Riley. I **know** exactly **what** kind of she wolf you are.”

He took a step **closer**, his broad frame crowding her space, the air **tightening** with his scent—rich cedar and fury.

“If you apologize to her right now,” he continued, “I might pretend this little outburst didn’t happen.”

“But if you don’t. His lips curled into a cold **smile**. “I have ways to make you regret it.”

Riley stared up at him, her expression unreadable.

Not hurt. Not angry. Just..quiet.

That only made him angrier.

Once, years ago, **this** same girl would **have** looked at him with fire and tears. Would **have** pushed back. Fought him with **that** same brilliance that made her unforgettable.

But now? Now she didn’t even care.

Five years in the Rogue prisons had stripped her of illusions—but forged her **into**: steel.

She didn’t flinch at Ronan’s accusations.

Didn’t tremble at his threats.

In her **mind**, he **was just** another Vale man who thought his opinion **defined** her **worth**. And she was done letting them.

**But Andy**, standing nearby, was nowhere near as composed.

“What the hell is wrong with you?” he snapped, stepping forward with fists clenched. “You **speak** like you’ve got fangs growing from your skull instead of sense. Did you even see what happened?”

**Andy** jabbed a finger toward Scarlett, who was **hiding** behind Ronan like a wounded pup. “Your precious little damsel attacked Riley. Grabbed her hair like a feral wolf **And you want** her to apologize?”

Ronan’s gaze flicked to **Andy with** disgust.

“You’re not even **pack**. This doesn’t concern you.”

Before Andy could reply. Riley placed a hand gently on **his** arm.

“It’s not worth it” she said softly. “The Matriarch’s celebration is about to begin”

She turned her **voice** cool as ever. “Don’t waste your **breath** on people who stopped mattering **five years ago**

Konan stiffened

Not because of the words—but because of the way **she** said them. As if he never **mattered**.

That cut deeper than he cared to admit

He didn’t want her forgiveness. But being ignored: Being discarded!

That he couldn’t tolerate

His hand lashed out—faster **than** Riley anticipated—and caught her by the wrist,

30PMP P.

Chapter 124

One sharp tug, and she stumbled back against the corridor wall, the impact jarring the **breath** from her lungs.

The gift box in her arms tumbled to the floor.

+8 Pearls

The embroidered cloth inside—a delicate heirloom piece she’d spent weeks stitching for Lucien’s grandmother—**spilled** across the tiles.

“Apologize, Ronan snarled, pressing her against the wall, fury thick in his voice. “Now”

Riley’s eyes widened in shock, then narrowed with loathing. She pushed against him, but his body was like stone **unyielding**.

**Andy’s** shriek split the air.

“You’ve gone rabid! Let her go!” He lunged forward **and** shoved Ronan with all his strength.

Ronan **didn’t** even budge. He turned, expression dark, and slammed a boot into Andy’s ribs.

Andy hit the floor with a **groan**, curling **in pain**.

Riley gasped, torn between fury and fear. But before she could move to help, a shadow passed over the fallen embroidery.

Scarlett bent down, picked it up—delicately, almost lovingly—and inspected it.

Riley’s blood ran cold.

“Put **that** down, she said sharply, voice trembling with restraint.

Scarlett smirked.

“I was just trying to help,” she said sweetly, but her claws dug into the delicate threads, warping the shapes Riley **had** painstakingly stitched. “Is this...a gift for the old **Luna**? How quaint.”

“Scarlett, Riley warned, stepping forward.

But Scarlett pulled **back**, clutching the **fabric** closer.

Riley didn’t think. She lunged.

The slap echoed like a whip crack

Scarlett reeled, staggered, one **hand** flying to her **face**.

A perfect red imprint bloomed across her cheek, blood **beading** at the corner of her mouth.

Her eyes widened in stunned disbelief Not at the pain—but that Riley **dared** strike her in front of Ronan

Her tears came **instantly**, as **though** summoned on command

“**Ronan** she fat me,” she sobbed. “I tried to help, and she just—she **snapped!**”

Ronan growled low in **his** throat, struding toward them.

But Riley didn’t **look** at **him**. Her eyes were locked on the embroidery now crumpled in Scarlett’s grip

Scarlett’s agris clenched ughter crushing the stitches further

Riley saw red

With **a smart, she launched** herself forward, **claws** out, tackling Scarlet to the floor.

ubes tumbled

blur of **ulk** surls, and claws.

343 PM P P .

Chapter 124

“GET OFF HER! Ronan roared.

He grabbed Riley around the waist, yanking her off like she weighed nothing.

Riley thrashed in his grip, snarling like a wolf finally pushed too far.

“You **bastard!** Let go of me!”

He dragged her to a side room and kicked the door shut **behind** them.

“Bang!”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 821 words ]

## Chapter 125

The heavy wooden door slammed **shut** behind them with a thunderous bang.

+8 Pearls

In the next instant, Ronan Duskgrave shoved Riley Vale hard against the door, **his** muscular frame radiating heat and fury as it caged her in.

“Have you lost your mind. Riley?” he growled, his voice low, gravelly, and full of Alpha authority. His face hovered inches from hers, his scent—dark pine and aggression—thickening the air.

Riley was trembling, but not out of fear. She **was** seething-

Her chest heaved as she **stared** back at him with eyes blazing in defiance. “Let go of me!”

But Ronan didn’t loosen his grip. His large hand was clamped around her wrist like iron, claws barely sheathed, his wolf on the verge of surfacing.

“What **the** hell are you trying to do?” he demanded, his eyes glowing faintly amber.

Riley’s breath evened. Her voice turned ice cold.

“No,” she hissed. The real question is—**what** are you trying to do?”

“I was locked in a rogue prison for five years. Five years. I lost my future. My health. My name. Everything I worked for- burned to **ash** because of you and your precious Vale pack.”

“I became this...” Her voice cracked, but she forced the rest out, this broken thing. And you stand here asking me what **I**

Her eyes locked onto **his**, daring him to deny it.

“All I’ve ever wanted,” **she said** slowly, each word soaked in venom, “**was** to stay the hell away from you people. Is **that** too much to ask?”

For a split second, something flickered in Ronan’s eyes—**guilt**? Regret?

But Riley was past caring.

She gave a bitter laugh. “You crushed my wings, Ronan. Do you even know **what** it feels like to be grounded when you were bom to soar?”

“I used to ask myself—**what** did I do **wrong**? What sin did I commit to deserve this? But **now I get** it. I was too good. Too strong Too fast. **Too** smart And that scared the hell out of you.”

“You couldn’t handle a she wolf being better than **you**”

Ronan’s face paled

cracked, revealing **the shame** he’d buried deep, even from himself.

And Kiley saw it She saw the truth in his silence

“You hated that the gut running brute you in training could outpace you That the **warrior** you couldn’t catch up to **was** the same girl **you** were falling for So you broke her”

“Because if I was ordinary she spat, then maybe just **maybe** you could believe I belonged to you”

“Stop” Ronan snapped, his voice dangerously close to trembling “That’s not true”

That I Haley’s vane ruse cutting through the air like a blade “You couldn’t **stand** to see me shine. You wanted me small. Obedient Powerless

stop it Kaley he barked 1 sand stop

Chapter 125

But she didn’t stop.

You’re a coward, Ronan Duskgrave. You destroyed the girl who once loved you—just to feel superior.”

The words hit like claws raking across his chest. Ronan staggered back a step, his breath unsteady.

But then his wolf snapped..

In a **flash**. he surged forward and kissed her—hard and unforgiving

His mouth crushed against hers, not out of love, but out of desperation. Possessive. Punishing

Riley froze, stunned. For a heartbeat, she couldn’t even think. Then rage flooded every vein in her body.

She struggled violently, fists pounding his chest. “Get off me!”

+8 Pearls

But Ronan wouldn't budge. His arms locked around her, his body pressing her deeper against the door like he could consume

her whole.

He wasn't kissing her—he was claiming her.

And that was the final straw.

Riley's wolf surged beneath her **skin**, a blinding flash of white heat **clawing** to the surface.

Her eyes burned gold. Her canines lengthened. She could feel the transformation pressing **against** her bones.

But she held it back.

Not here. Not now.

Today is Lucien's grandmother's birthday.

**Andy** worked so hard on my look.

I can't let this turn into a bloodbath.

But her restraint **had** limits.

She bared her teeth—and bit **down**.

Hard

Ronan **groaned** in pain **as** blood bloomed on his lip. He recoiled just enough, and **that's** when Riley **slapped** him.

The **sound** cracked through the room like thunder.

He staggered back, touching his jaw, blood **staining** his fingers.

“You're disgusting” Kiley spat, wiping her lips with the back of her **hand** “You **make** me sick”

The **words** sliced through him far deeper than her teeth or slap ever could

Eight years

He had loved her for right long, wasted **years**.

He never turbed another woman

He waited

waited for her

s imprisoned, even after the world called her a traitor, he sull dreamed of the day she'd come ba

10PM PP.

Chapter 125

+8 Pearls

And now

Now she looked at **him** like he was filth.

“You think I’m disgusting?” he choked, voice rough. “I-”

Riley didn’t give him the chance to finish.

“**You** don’t get to play the **victim** now, Ronan,” she said coldly. “You were never my mate. **You** were just the boy who envied the girl he couldn’t keep up with.”

Then she walked past him, shoulders **straight**, leaving behind the shattered **remains** of **what** used to be love.

And behind her. Ronan stood alone in the silence—bleeding, humiliated, and for the first **time** in his life, unwanted.

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1

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 913 words ]

Chapter 126

+8 Pearls

Just as Riley Vale stepped out of the **private** suite, her eyes locked on a chaotic scene at the corridor's end.

Andi was tugging desperately at the embroidered silk scroll, **while** Scarlett Vale clutched it to her chest, both refusing to let

Then-

“Rip—1”

The unmistakable **sound** of fine silk being torn cut through the **air** like a blade.

Andi froze. hands trembling. His lips parted, but no words came out. He could only stare in stunned horror at the ruined remains of the embroidery now sagging between them.

Scarlett, for a brief moment, allowed a flicker of schadenfreude to **cross** her face.

But then, like flipping a switch, her expression twisted into a mask of innocence. Her wide doe eyes filled with tears as she turned to Riley and whimpered, “Sister, I didn’t mean to! He tried to snatch it from me I **only** wanted to help protect it for

you

Riley’s breath caught in her throat.

The image of the delicate embroidery being torn into shreds—that **she’d** spent weeks sewing by **moonlight**, every thread a symbol of silent redemption—blurred her vision.

That wasn’t just silk.

It was the **two**–million–dollar gift **that Alpha** Lucien Stormbourne had personally entrusted her to deliver to the Elder Matriarch:

The symbol of reconciliation.

The only thing that could justify her presence here.

And now it was destroyed.

She saw red.

With her wolf howling in her blood. Riley lunged.

She seized Scarlett by the **hair** and slammed her head against the marble wall.

“Die Scarlett!” Riley snarled. “You ruin everything you touch!”

Scarlett shrieked in pain, **blood** splattering **against** the white stone as her **scalp** cracked open. She collapsed against the wall.

obbing and clutching her head

Andi stumbled back, eyes wide in shock. “Oh my goddess.

He had never seen Riley like this

Not even during her worst days behind the bars

Then came the thunder of heavy boots

Konan Duikgrave emerged from the room like a storm. His gaze swept over Scarlett’s bloodied face, then shot to Kiley’s gambling form

“What the hell are **you doing** he barked, storming forward **and** shoving Riley off her sister.

Kiley staggered but **caught** herself. Her eyes burned with fury

14 PM

Chapter 126

+8 Pearls

“Oh, I’m the one making a scene now?” she shouted, **voice** shaking. “Wasn’t it your precious Scarlett **who** tore Who clawed at my hair and spat on my name—and you defended her!”

up my work?

Ronan’s jaw clenched.

“I don’t care who started it, he growled. “This is the Elder’s birthday celebration—if you can’t control yourself-

Riley cut him off with a **sharp** laugh. “Control myself?”

“You stood there and watched while she destroyed everything I had left. **And** now I’m the one causing trouble?”

She bent down and picked up the torn embroidery, holding it out like a bloodied offering. Her hands shook as she held the two shredded halves before **Ronan’s** face..

“This was handcrafted,” she said through gritted teeth. “This was the piece Alpha Lucien **won** for two million silver marks to honor the Matriarch.”

Ronan’s eyes narrowed, voice going cold. “What did you just say?”

Scarlett’s smile stiffened. “T–two million?” **she** stammered. “That can’t be right.. it’s **just** a piece of cloth-

Riley’s gaze sharpened into daggers.

“This piece of cloth was designed by Elder Sera of the Northern Weavers, embroidered by my own hands over weeks. It was gifted to Alpha Lucien. He entrusted me to deliver it as a gesture of goodwill on behalf of Stormridge.”

Then she turned her burning gaze to Scarlett.

“You didn’t just tear silk, Scarlett—you insulted **an Alpha’s** honor.”

**Ronan’s** expression twisted with disbelief. His throat bobbed as he swallowed, and for the first time **tonight**, he looked afraid.

If Lucien found out....

Scarlett paled, her lips trembling-

“I–I didn’t know-

Andi couldn’t take it anymore. He stepped forward, spitting fire,

“You **think everyone** lives in your **shallow little** world of lip gloss **and** pity money, don’t **you?**”

“She offered you something priceless, and you think you can **buy** your way out of it with your daddy’s allowance? One million silver? Are **you** out of your freaking **mind?**”

Scarlett flinched. “I was **just** trying to help

“Help” Riley’s voice sliced through the lie. “**You** grabbed it like a hyena in heat. You wanted to destroy it

“**You** never expected anyone **would give** me something **so** valuable You couldn’t stand that it **was me and** not **you** So you ruined

She took a step closer, the power beneath her skin **dangerously** close to snapping

**Konan** felt it—the white wolf stirring inside her

Her aura flared, brushing the edges of Alpha strength, a blinding slumber behind her irises. For a moment, he thought she might **shin** right then and there

But she didn

he inhaled once. Twice

Today was the Matranch’s **birthday**

Chapter 126

She couldn’t let blood stain the celebration.

And she wouldn’t let Scarlett or Ronan see her lose control again.

+8 Pearle

So she straightened her shoulders, raised her chin, and with deliberate slowness.. tore the **ruined** embroidery once more. right down the center.

“Now,” she said coldly, dropping the **remains** at Scarlett’s feet, “it’s worthless.”

Then she turned her gaze on Ronan—sharp, accusing, **final**.

“Remember this, Ronan Duskgrave.”

“You may **think** you’re still the boy I once admired. But now I know the truth.”

“You’re not strong. You’re not noble. You’re just a man **too** weak to stop the wolves in your own home from **tearing** others apart.

Then she turned to Andi.

-Let’s go.”

Andi looked at her like **she was** glowing, eyes wet with admiration and fury. He scooped up what was left of the embroidery, shoved it into his bag, and followed Riley down the corridor like a knight behind a queen.

Behind them. Scarlett knelt on the ground, blood **still trailing** down her temple.

Ronan stood frozen.

And the remnants of Stormridge's goodwill lay shredded **at** their feet.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 850 words ]

Chapter 127

Riley Vale took **a** deep **breath**, her expression like stone carved by ice.

+8 Pearls

She had no desire to waste

e more words with **Ronan** Duskcliff or that two-faced **snake**, Scarlett. Her tone was low, steady, and cold **as** the northern wind.

"Andi," she said sharply, "call Prince Lucien. Tell **him** to come. Now."

Andi nodded with grim resolve, already reaching for his communicator when Ronan moved faster than lightning, snatching it from his hand.

"No," Ronan barked, his Alpha aura crackling in the air.

Lucien Duskgrave could not find out—not yet. Not before Ronan figured out a way to clean this up. If the Alpha Prince of the Stormridge Pack learned what had happened here, not only would Ronan lose access to the East Hollow Project, **but** the Duskcliff name might never recover.

Andi tried to snatch it back, furious, but before the two could struggle further, the sharp clicking of heels echoed across the corridor.

A woman's voice rang out with practiced elegance, laced with ice. "Scarlett, **darling**, the banquet is about to start. Why on earth are **you** still out here? We've been looking everywhere."

Scarlett straightened. Her eyes darted toward the end of the **corridor**.

Lady **Seraphina** Duskgrave walked toward them, flanked by half a dozen high-ranking she-wolves—Lunas and noblewomen from the inner circles of the Council Packs. Seraphina's gown shimmered in moon-silver threads, her posture proud **and commanding**, her every step echoing polished dominance.

But when her gaze landed on Riley, her expression turned **dark**, venomous.

"There you are, you filthy little tramp."

Riley blinked, startled by the venom in the woman's voice.

Before she could **ask** whether she was being mistaken for someone **else**, Seraphina snapped toward her entourage, "That's the one. The Omega slut who's been **seducing** my mate Ford."

Gasps fluttered among the women behind her like startled birds.

Seraphina **stormed** forward, high heels clacking like thunder across marble. Without warning, she raised her hand, aiming slap directly at Riley's face.

Riley stepped **back** instinctively, dodging the **blow** with ease.

"This must be a mistake," she said, voice tight but controlled. "I don't **know** you, and I've never-

"Don't play innocent, you little whore, Scraphina snarled. "You **think** you're special because you've been in **Alpha's** bed

you know how many like you I've seen?"

Do

The women behind her didn't need further prompting. One by one, they joined in, their voices rising like a **pack** circling a wounded deer.

"Look at her—clearly a heat-addled stray," scoffed a woman in a gold gown. "Probably climbed her **way** into the Stormindge Pack's territory on her back."

"Shreeks of desperation **You** can smell a from here spat another, her lips curling in disdain.

They've seen cleaner bitches in the Silverfang Den, a third chimed, and a wave of cruel laughter followed.

They shoved her hard.

## Chapter 127

+8 Pearls

Riley, thin from years in captivity, staggered back. Someone elbowed her ribs. Another grabbed her arm and shoved. She nearly lost her balance-

Andi caught her.

“Enough!” Andi snapped, eyes blazing. “Touch her again and I swear, your whole damn estate will be begging for scraps. within a moon cycle.”

The women didn’t even flinch.

What are you gonna do, little pet?” one sneered. “Run back to your Beta boyfriend?”

“A trash Omega slut and her sissy little **sidekick**. How **quaint**.”

Andi trembled with fury.

And Ronan?

Ronan Duskcliff stood back. Watching. Silent.

He knew Riley wasn’t lying. She had just been released from Wolf **Prison**. Since her release, she’d either been under house arrest at the Eborclaw estate or recovering at Mooncrest Hospital. There was no way she could’ve seduced anyone.

And especially not Ford, Lucien’s father,

And yet he said nothing.

Riley’s claws itched beneath her **skin**. Her wolf snarled inside her, thrashing against her ribs.

She **could** shift.

She could let her wolf out.

They’d see what a real threat looked like when the white wolf—the cursed wolf—unleashed her fury.

But not today.

Not **on** Matriarch Duskgrave’s 80th birthday.

**And not** after **Andi** had spent **hours** helping her prepare, carefully crafting her look, her dress, her hair—so she could **enter** that ballroom with dignity.

She clenched her fists **and** forced the shift down.

Her bones ached. Her magic buzzed under her skin like **static**.

But she would not shift,

She stepped forward instead, **brushing** past Lady Seraphina with barely contained **rage in** her voice.

“You **thank** I’m scared of you?” she said, voice low **and** deadly calm. “You think you can break me with **words and** whispers I’ve already survived worse than any of you could ever imagine”

**she** paused, her glare sweeping across the wolves surrounding her.

“**You** call me a tramp A whore A stray But all I see are bored wives in expensive gowns, clinging to men who don’t **even** love

you

You want to tear **the** down to feel powerful Fine But don’t **mistake** your status for strength”

id is jaw dropped. Even Scarlen went **pale**

But Holey wasn’t finished

may

of have wealth, or a **bloodline** you recognize. But I have something none of **you** do—truth. And that **truth** is ens

Chapter 127

to burn your paper crowns to **ash**”

+8 Pearls

She turned to Seraphina, eyes blazing like stormfire. “If your mate prefers me over you, maybe the problem isn’t me. Maybe it’s the fact **that** even Alphas get tired of sleeping next to poison.”

The corridor went silent.

The women stared, stunned.

And Riley?

She walked **away**.

Head **high**.

Eyes forward.

Unbroken.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 773 words ]

Chapter 128

D

+8 Pearls

Scarlett put on her best mask of **worry**, her voice trembling as she stepped forward and tugged gently at Lady **Seraphina** Duskgrave's sleeve

"Lady Seraphina, she's my sister. Her name is Riley Vale. Maybe—maybe there's some misunderstanding here?"

Hearing **this**, the fury **in** Seraphina's eyes only intensified.

So this shameless hussy was Scarlett's sister? That made everything worse.

Scarlett had long been her confidante. Ever since they grew close, Scarlett had frequently, almost innocently, spoken of being mistreated and bullied by her elder sister.

Seraphina had already harbored distaste for the infamous Riley Vale. But when she realized the same woman who had **once** dared raise her **hand against** Scarlett **was** now also the one in the photo Matriarch Duskgrave had **sent** her **husband**—it was as if oil **had** been poured **onto an** open flame.

She loathed Riley Vale with every fiber of her being.

And she knew Andi.

That flamboyant little peacock might act harmless, but he was one of the North's most sought-after stylists. Some of the Stormridge Pack's most iconic looks **had** come from his hands.

Though stylists like him were impossible for most to **book**, the Duskgrave family **could** get anyone. Yet **today**, it wasn't Lady Seraphina he'd dressed—it **was** Riley.

The rage twisted in her gut like a curse.

Was **that** old bat. Matriarch Duskgrave, really so disappointed in her after all these years? Seraphina had been married to Lucien's father Ford for over two decades, living under the weight of judgment, enduring cold glances **and** hushed rumors. And yet, she had never won the matriarch's favor,

And now this?

That woman was grooming a new Luna—a **young**, fertile one.

A replacement.

Her eyes dropped to Riley's flat **stomach**. She imagined her swelling with **his** heir.

Her vision went red.

She couldn't bear it. Wouldn't

No woman would give the Duskgrave bloodline **an** heir if she couldn't.

That right belonged to her—and her **alone**

She hadn't been barren by choice. It was that cursed brat Lucien—only five years old when he pushed her down the stairs.

her pregnancy and her womb in a single, **vicious** moment. The doctors said it had been **an** accident.

She knew better

She would not let **Riley** give him another.

cream that was more beast than **woman**. Seraphina lunged **forward and** grabbed Riley by the hair, yanking her head.

down hard

“You think fucking your little tail will make men crawl after you she shrieked “I’ll teach you what happens to whores who mistake **lust** for power

344 P u p

Chapter 128

+8 Pearls

Riley gritted her teeth, pain shooting through her scalp. **She** grabbed at Seraphina’s hands. “Let go! I don’t even **know** your husband

But no one was listening.

Andi tried to intervene but was instantly surrounded by a pack of feral **Lunas**. They scratched at him with manicured claws, drawing blood across his cheeks and arms until his face was streaked with crimson.

“Back off” he shouted. “Do you even know who she is? She belongs to Lucien Duskgrave! If you touch her again, he will bury you and your pack with a single command!”

His voice boomed down the corridor.

Everything went still for a **second**.

And then Seraphina laughed.

A loud, manic laugh.

“She belongs to Lucien? My stepson? The one who hasn’t looked at a single woman in thirty years suddenly **has a** little Omega peta

Her eyes gleamed. wild and unhinged.

“Oh, you’re good,” she hissed, pulling harder. “But not good enough.”

The crowd surged again.

Insults flew like daggers.

“Filthy bitch!”

“Bedwarmer

“**Gold**—digging mutt

Riley fought to stay on her feet, but Seraphina’s grip was ruthless. Someone slammed **a** heel into the back of her calf—sharp,

She stumbled

Thud

She hit the ground hard, her knees slamming into the marble floor **with** a sickening **crunch**.

Before she could catch her breath, two hands grabbed her arms and wrenched her upright **again**, forcing her into **a** kneel

Seraphina released her hair Riley’s long **dark** strands **fell** across her face in tangled **waves**, blood trickling down her lip.

She could feel every sneer every side look piercing her **like** arrows. Her wolf whampered inside, not from **weakness**—but

from the weight of injustice. The need to **rip** and tear surged **just** beneath the surface.

**But** she held back

Seraphina stood tall towering over her eyes alight **with** vicious triumph

m—SLAP

Her hand cracked across Riley’s left cheek. The sound echoed like a whip anap through the comdor

Riley’s head snapped to the side. Her cheek blossomed red instantly

HPMP P

Chapter 128

SLAP—the other cheek **this** time,

Riley’s head reeled

Her face burned. Her ears **rang**. Her mouth tasted of blood.

SLAP

SLAP

SLAP

Again. **And again.**

And again.

By the fifth strike, Riley no longer felt the **pain**. Only numbness.

Her eyes stared blankly at the ground.

D

+B Pearls

Her knees dug **into** the cold stone. Her hair hung like a curtain, sticky with blood and sweat. The hallway around her buzzed and blurred, voices blending **into** a cruel, faceless mob.

And Seraphina?

She smiled.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 851 words ]

Chapter 129

+8 Pearis

**Andy** tried to push through the wall of furious she-wolves, his **usually** polished appearance now in ruins—his face **was** streaked with bloody scratches, his designer **coat** ripped **and** dangling from his shoulders. He fought like mad, but he was no **match** for the pack-born strength of the matriarchs surrounding Riley.

Just three meters away, Ronan Duskcliff stood still, watching it all unfold with a chilling calm. His expression betrayed nothing, but his eyes shimmered with a storm of emotion.

He hated seeing her like this—broken, bloodied, humiliated.

And yet, he did nothing.

Riley Vale was too stubborn, Too proud. Too **wild**. He'd told her before—he didn't need a **Luna** who fought back against her fate, who clawed her way through the world like a rogue. No, he wanted a docile mate. A quiet one. **One** who knew her place.

He was waiting. Waiting for her to look up at him and beg.

Just say the word, Riley, he thought. Just beg. And I'll protect you.

Their eyes locked,

In her pain-glazed gaze, he saw it all—disdain, betrayal, and cold, seething clarity.

And Riley saw through him too. She saw the sick expectation lurking in his eyes. The twisted pleasure of control. The silent chant behind his silence:

Beg me.

Her lip curled in a **blood**-smear'd smile. Contempt gleamed in her eyes like **broken glass**.

Never.

**Even** if it killed her, she'd never give him that satisfaction

Ronan's chest tightened like a steel trap. Shame, anger, and some twisted form of regret boiled in his veins. He took a hesitant step forward—but the coldness in Riley's eyes struck him like a slap. And so, he froze.

Meanwhile, Lady Seraphina Duskgrave was snarling like a beast **unchained**,

"You dare smile? You think this is funny, you filthy slut?"

With a scream, she lunged at Riley, clawing at **the** remnants of her dress.

Two other noble she-wolves joined her, ripping fabric **and skin** with the **fury** of scorned mates. Riley's gown shredded beneath their claws, leaving welts and torn **skin** in their wake.

"Strip her!"

"She wants attention Let's give it to her!"

The blows rained down like hail Fists Heels Nails Words.

Slur seductress Whore.

They dragged her across the marble floors, leaving streaks of blood behind her hump body. What remained of her gown. fluttered in tauters, exposing the bruised, **pale** skin of her back and shoulders Her dignity. Her identity. Her humanity- stripped to front of their all

Drag her to the ballroom Scraplana shrieked “Let the males see what kind of filth, she really is!”

Some the wolves besitated “But its Matriarch Duskgrave’s birthday..

“I am Dhuskgrave a daughter–in–law Seraphina snapped. To as I say!”

“Do

24 pp.

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0

+8 Pearls

They grabbed Riley again, her body a ragdoll in their claws.

Behind them. Ronan still didn’t move. Scarlett clung to his arm, whispering poison into his ear.

“She brought this on herself, Brother Ronan. You can’t risk our alliance with the Stormridge **Pack** over her...”

He didn’t respond. Not really. He just stared, guilt tightening **like a** noose. He told himself again and again.

She deserved it. She provoked Seraphina. She refused to submit. This was her fault.

Andy, bloodied and barely able to **stand**, suddenly screamed, “Let her go, or you’ll answer to Prince Lucien!”

The name hit **the** air like lightning

Everyone froze–momentarily.

Then scoffed.

“Lucien Duskgrave!” Seraphina cackled. “That boy’s been **in** the North for three months and already found himself a plaything? I don’t buy it. And even if it were true—he’ll never choose her.”

Her claws descended **again**, raking across Riley’s bare shoulder-

And that was the last straw.

A growl ripped through the air.

No—not a growl.

A roar. A guttural, primal, chilling sound **that** echoed off the stone **halls** of the Duskgrave Estate.

Seraphina spun **around**, but it was already too late.

The scent of **ozone**. Of ancient power. Of winter storms.

In **a flash** of blinding silver–white light, Riley’s broken body contorted and shifted.

Bones cracked

Flesh melted.

Claws burst from bloodied fingers.

Before anyone could scream, a massive white wolf lunged from the center of the pack.

**She was** huge—twice the size of a normal she–wolf—coated in fur like new–fallen snow, stained red from her own blood. Her eyes blazed like molten moonlight, full of pain, fury, and vengeance.

Kiley—the trueborn white wolf of the Ebonclaw Alpha bloodline—had finally awakened.

**And she** was pissed.

With a snarl **that** made even the guards **flinch**, she clamped her jaws **around Seraphina’s** throat **and** threw her back ten feet. The **Alpha’s** mate crashed into a **marble** column with **a sickening crack, sliding** down **in** a heap.

The ballroom exploded into screams. The nobles scattered, heels clicking, gowns **flaring**, trying to flee

Riley didn’t chase them

She stalked toward Seraphina, blood dripping from her **maw**

One paw. Another Each step deliberate Each breath vibrating with barely–  
contained **wrath**.

The Lady of Stormridge coughed, tried to rise—and the white **wolf pounced**.

344 PM P P-

Chapter 129

Claws sank into her shoulders. A warning growl rumbled low and deadly **in** Riley's  
throat.

Then she opened her jaws-

Just as the door burst open.

A cold, sharp wind swept into the corridor.

And with it came Ford.

Lucien's father.

+8 Pearls:

He stood tall in the threshold, the shadows curling around him like loyal hounds. His  
eyes—ice blue, ancient, commanding- locked onto **the** scene before him.

The white wolf.

Seraphina bloodied beneath her.

Dozens of nobles cowering.

And Riley glowing like vengeance incarnate.

“Seraphina, what are **you** doing?!”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 845 words ]

## Chapter 130

Ford's voice cut through the chaos like **a** blade of ice.

It wasn't loud, but the weight behind it silenced the room.

+8 Pearls

Displeasure laced every syllable as he strode further into the grand **ballroom**. "And here I thought this was supposed to be Matriarch Duskgrave's birthday celebration. When did it turn into Lady Seraphina's personal farce?"

The nobles parted for him instinctively. No one dared block the path of the Stormridge Pack's Alpha Prince. His towering figure **radiated** dominance, his piercing gaze sweeping across the crowd before **landing** squarely on the disheveled, bloodied figure of Riley still crouched low in her wolf form, fangs bared, breathing heavily over the nearly unconscious Seraphina.

A silence thicker **than** smoke filled the hall.

Lady Seraphina, however, seemed to have lost all reason. She broke into a shrill laugh, voice hoarse but triumphant. "What farce? I merely caught this slut in the act! She seduced my husband—destroyed my family!"

With one bloodied **hand**, she pointed directly at Riley. "This is the bitch who's been climbing into Ford's bed behind my back!"

The crowd gasped, **some** eyes darting toward Ford Duskgrave, who stood a few **paces away**, his expression **ashen**. He **quickly** stepped forward and clamped a hand over Seraphina's mouth. "Have you lost your mind?!"

His **voice** was low but **furious**. "Today is my mother's eightieth birthday. This **is a** noble event—you're disgracing the **Duskgrave** name!"

Seraphina shoved his hand away, her composure **cracking** into wild hysteria. "Disgracing it? I'm the Luna of this family! **That** she—wolf seduced you and ruined our marriage! Why shouldn't I **expose** her here, in front of everyone?!"

Her voice echoed off the ornate walls, bouncing between the crystal chandeliers and long banquet tables.

Eyes turned once more toward Riley, whose wolf form still trembled with rage. Her snowy fur, streaked with blood and torn silk, was a stark contrast to the velvet and gold décor of the hall. Her ears twitched. Her lip curled.

The **tension** was on the brink of exploding—again.

**But** then-

A colder **voice slid** into the room like poison.

“When did this celebration become about you, Lady Seraphina?”

The entire hall seemed to freeze in **place**.

Seraphina’s body stiffened. Her eyes slowly turned—only to find **Lucien** Duskgrave standing at the edge of the crowd, **the glass** doors behind him still swaying from his entrance.

The Northern Prince

He was dressed in midnight black, his long coat **soaked** from the rain outside, silver embroidery catching the candlelight like steel. His jaw was sharp, expression unreadable, but his eyes—those infamous **silver**—blue eyes—were glowing with thinly veiled fury

All the heat drained from Seraphina’s face in an instant

Earlier in her blind rage, she hadn’t even considered whether Lucien would appear. She’d been consumed with punishing Kiley, desperate to reclaim some twisted arm of control

But now that Lucien was here, she felt as though she’d walked barefoot into a blizzard.

She stumbled to her feet, trying to smooth her bloodied gown “1—Lord Lucien of course the celebration is for the Matriarch 1-1 **was** just trying to lighten the mood.!”

Chapter 130

+8 Pearls

Lucien’s expression didn’t change. “By dragging a half-dead she-wolf through the halls and accusing her of adultery in front of fifty noble witnesses?”

Seraphina’s mouth opened, then closed. No sound came out.

Lucien turned slightly, his gaze flicking to Riley. His wolf eyes softened for a fleeting second—just long enough for those who watched closely to catch it.

“She’s not your threat, Lady Seraphina,” Lucien said, voice barely above a whisper, but with the power of a command. “Your insecurity is

That **struck** deeper **than** any slap. Seraphina's face flushed red, then ghost-white. Ford stepped forward, as if to defend her, but one look from Lucien halted him in his tracks.

"You've humiliated the Duskgrave family," Lucien continued. "You disgraced my grandmother's birthday. You led others in attacking an unshifted wolf in the middle of a formal gathering."

He didn't raise his voice. He didn't need to.

The crowd had gone completely silent.

Lucien's next words were cold **and** final. "From this moment on, you are no longer recognized as the Luna of this Pack."

Seraphina staggered back as if struck. "No you can't.."

Lucien's expression was carved in ice. "I already **have**."

Whispers **broke** out across the room like wildfire.

Ford looked **as** though he might protest—but Lucien turned to him too. "If you still wish to stand beside her, so be it. But **know this**: I will personally ensure she is exiled from Stormridge within the hour."

Seraphina collapsed to her knees.

Behind her, Riley finally shifted back. Her human form emerged from the glow of the transformation, skin pale, covered in wounds and bruises. Her dress was **in** tatters. Her hair was matted with blood.

**And** yet she stood taller than any of them.

—

Proud. Unbroken.

Her eyes met Lucien's. She gave him a single nod—one that said everything and nothing.

Lucien crossed the room and draped a cloak over her shoulders, his **hand** lingering protectively on her **back**.

-She **under** Stormridge protection now," he said, facing the crowd. "Touch her **again**, and you answer to me."

Silence.

Kiley Vale, once the forgotten daughter of the **Ebonclaw** Pack, now stood surrounded by royalty. **Beaten** but not **bowed**.

And the first crack in the Duskgrave empire had just been made.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 826 words ]

Chapter 131

Lucien's POV

The moment I stepped into the grand hall, the scent of blood hit me like a thunderclap.

Not just any blood—no,

+8 Pearls

This was the kind of blood **that** reeked of **humiliation** and **pain**, the kind that came from a she-wolf being torn **apart**, not just physically, but soul-deep.

My wolf snapped awake, howling inside me. My instincts surged like wildfire as I strode toward the center of the chaos.

Several **high**-ranking noblewomen **were** standing there, pale and jittery. One of them offered me a nervous smile.

“Alpha Lucien we were just playing around. It was just a harmless—”

“Just a **joke**,” another chimed in weakly.

I didn't **spare** them a glance. My eyes locked onto the battered body crumpled on the cold marble **floor**.

Riley

Her dress **was** in shreds, her pale skin marked with bruises and claw scratches, blood matting her hair, face swollen beyond recognition—and yet, I knew her.

No matter what they did to her, I would always recognize her.

My white **wolf**.

My **heart** clenched, rage flooding every inch of my body.

Without hesitation, I shrugged off my custom-tailored coat **and** knelt beside her. As gently as I could, I draped it over her trembling, blood-soaked body.

**Gasps** rippled **through** the **room** behind me.

They'd never seen me like this.

Lucien Duskgrave—cold, controlled, untouchable—cradling a woman soaked in filth and blood like she was the most precious thing in the world.

Because she was.

I scooped her into my arms. Gods, she was light. Too light. Like all the strength had been drained from her bones.

Then, she stirred.

blood

Her lashes fluttered, blood sticking them together, and she cracked open her eyes to look at me. Her lips curved into a fragile smile

“Alpha.” Her voice was barely audible. “**You came** for me.

That smile—gods, that smile—stabbed through my chest like an iron blade.

My **throat** burned. I swallowed hard and whispered, “Yeah. I’m here.”

I could feel every **shiver** of her broken body through my shirt. Her shoulder blades were so **sharp** they felt like knives under her skin. My hold on her tightened instinctively.

Then, I looked up

And the room went silent

Chapter 131

+8 Pearls

I **didn't need** to raise my voice: One look was enough to silence even the most arrogant nobles. My fury bled into the air **like a** storm cloud thick with lightning.

My gaze **landed** on **Lady Seraphina**—the woman who once tried to manipulate her way into my **pack** and my lineage.

She froze under my stare. Her eyes widened with recognition, then horror. She **knew**.

She had gone too **far**..

“Seal the hall,” I said, my voice icy and **calm**. “No one leaves until 1

I turned to the pack enforcers standing at the edges. “Anyone who laid a hand on my girl better pray their limbs are worth enough to cover her pain.”

My Beta. Duke, was already relaying the order through his comms.

**And** that’s when Seraphina broke.

She let out a shrill scream and rushed at me like a cornered beast. “Lucien, please! She seduced your father! I only did **this** to protect the honor of—”

“Seduce?” Lechoed with a cold, bitter laugh.

I turned and walked toward her, step by step, forcing her to retreat until she slammed into the banquet table behind her.

“Looks like Lady **Seraphina** needs a refresher,” I said, “on how to tell the difference between truth and lies.”

I leaned in close, letting my words **fall** like blades

“Just like the last time... when I had to remind **you** of the difference between a **miscarriage** and a surgically removed womb.”

She gasped, stumbling as her hands gripped the tablecloth. Her manicured **nails** tore deep grooves into the velvet, and her scent was drowned in fear.

I didn’t spare her another glance. I turned back to Riley, still cradled in my arms, and walked toward the side exit.

The black marble beneath my feet was now streaked with blood—her blood—and each step I took felt like it etched **itself** into my bones.

As I approached the head of the table, my **grandmother**, Matriarch Duskgrave, rose from her seat, her face stormy with pain and fury

“**Grandmother**,” I said quietly, “May I borrow your ceremonial cloak?”

Without **hesitation**, she unclasped the heavy embroidered **cloak** from her shoulders and held it out to me. Her voice trembled with anger as she said, “Take it. And Lucien... make sure no one who **harmed** our girl **walks** out of here untouched.”

“I will.” | promised.

I draped the cloak around Riley, covering her completely. The rich crimson **fabric** with golden embroidery wrapped her like

second skin Only a sliver of her pale **ankle** showed—white as **snow** against bloodstained **silk**.

Scence fell again. **No** one dared **move**

I turned and walked out the **grand** hall’s double **doors**. The final glint of chandelier light caught on Seraphina’s twisted face

betour the doors **shut** beland me

She stood there shaking, lips moving wordlessly, until she finally turned to her husband.

1 Turin’s wrong” she stanumered, voire shaking “That woman she’s your mistress, isn’t she? That white wolf you’ve been **hiding** shar **your** whore?”

Because the truth had already burned its way into every wall of that cursed hall

Chapter 131

And now. vengeance would follow

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294

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 916 words ]

Chapter 132

+8 Pearls

Third Person’s POV

Ford's expression darkened **instantly**, his brows furrowing in displeasure. "What nonsense are you spewing now?"

Lady Seraphina Duskgrave snapped like a beast cornered, screaming in his face, "Nonsense? I saw the pictures your mother sent you! It was that bitch Riley! You **even** said that as long as she was satisfied, you had no objections!"

"You think I don't know? **Your** family just wants to replace me because I can't give you **an** heir! You're all so desperate to **find** someone young **and** fertile—like I'm the one to blame!"

"Is it my fault I can't-

BANG!

A thunderous slap of a cane on wood silenced her. The sound echoed through the ballroom like a whip crack. Matriarch Duskgrave stood **at** the head of the long table, her face pale with fury, her aged hand trembling around her cane.

"That's enough!" she thundered. "I sent those pictures to Ford so he'd recognize his future daughter-in-law!"

The words crashed **into** the ballroom like a bolt of lightning.

Lady Seraphina's smug expression froze mid-sentence.

Gasps erupted across the room.

The socialites who **had** helped Seraphina strip Riley and beat her now stood petrified, color draining from their faces. The realization hit like a guillotine: **they** hadn't assaulted some lowborn rogue... they had laid their hands **on** the mate of the Stormridge **Alpha** Prince.

Dead silence fell.

Because everyone **in Northhaven** knew what Lucien Duskgrave was capable of.

And they especially knew **what** happened to anyone who dared hurt what was his.

The phrase Lucien had uttered earlier—"Think carefully about whether your body parts are worth more **than** the pain **she** endured"—**now** became **crystal** clear.

Those women, who had moments ago gleefully **laughed** and clawed at Riley, now trembled like autumn leaves **in** a blizzard

**Some** fell to **their** knees in panic, crawling **toward Matriarch** Duskgrave in a desperate bid for mercy.

“Matriarch, we didn’t know please, it was all a misunderstanding.

“Forgive us, please!”

Matriarch Duskgrave didn’t even **glance** their way.

“You dared lay a hand on the girl I’ve already **acknowledged**? Hurt her until her bones were nearly broken—and now want to leave?” she sneered Do you think this is a tavern **brawl** you can slink **away** from?”

Their husbands—powerful Beta heirs, merchants, councilmen—had already rushed forward upon hearing the full truth Kage twisted their faces as they stared at their wives in disbelief and fury

“You laid hands on her?” one of the men growled, slapping his mate across the face. “You stupid fool, do you know w you se douet

In an instant chaos exploded The men lashed out at the **women** who had shamed their names and dragged their families into doo Screams echoed through the ballroom—not of Kiley **this** time but of the very women who had Laughed while kicking her

But

**Ban** the real terror still lingered in the air—thick and suffocating—as they all waited for Lucien **Duskgrave** to return.

PMP P.

Chapter 132

He hadn’t spoken of punishment yet.

But that silence was worse.

+8 Pearls

Lady **Seraphina** sat frozen on the floor, her nails digging into her arms, eyes wild with fear. Images of Lucien’s ruthlessness over the years played through her mind like a nightmare reel.

She remembered the stories.

Of how he'd handled rogues who chimed of how, at only five years **old**, he'd pushed her down the marble staircase after

she'd caused his mother's death. How he'd ordered doctors to take her womb—how he'd ensured she'd never bear a child **again**

He was **no** longer **the** boy she could lie to.

He had become a monster draped in civility, **and** that monster was coming back.

Ford watched Seraphina trembling, her body like a wind-struck leaf. A sliver of pity stirred in him. No matter how wrong she'd been, she was still his wife. And Riley **was** just a girl. A younger generation. Surely this didn't need to become a blood feud

He sighed heavily, stepped up to Matriarch Duskgrave's side, and attempted a softer tone.

"Mother, today's your eightieth birthday. Let's not escalate this. Lucien **has** always been impulsive. Maybe we should all just... calm down."

But Matriarch Duskgrave's response was anything but calm.

She turned with fire in her ancient eyes and slammed her cane hard against Ford's thigh.

THUD

He staggered slightly, stunned.

"You still **have** the gall to speak up for her?" she hissed. "If **it** weren't for **you** bringing that **trash** into this family, do you **think** Riley would have suffered like this?"

"My **granddaughter**—in-law—whom I handpicked—was humiliated, stripped, nearly killed at my own birthday banquet, **and** you **ask** me **to** stay **calm**?!"

Ford clenched his jaw, the sting of **humiliation** sharper **than** her cane. He glanced around at the **crowd and** then, **in** an effort to preserve some dignity, marched to the grand doors of the ballroom and tried to force them open.

They **didn't** budge.

"Duke," he called **out** sternly, voice laced with authority. "Open this door. Now."

Lucien's assistant remained calmly near the **control panel, still smiling**

“If the Chairman doesn’t want Alpha Lucien furious. I **suggest** he **remains right** where he is.”

Ford’s tone sharpened “I can **have** you dismissed in five seconds

Duke nodded. “I believe **you**. But for now I serve someone else.”

Ford’s face turned an angry shade of red, fists clenched, but there was **nothing** more he could do

The others watched in horror as even the Chairman was being openly denied.

Fear spread like wildfire

Lady Seraphina crumpled to the floor, her designer dress ruined her mind **broken**.

The other socialites, now black and **blue** from their husbands fury whimpered and **prayed** Lucien might take pity

Chapter 132

**But** none dared speak again.

+8 Pearls

The air inside the grand ballroom had turned to ice, thick with dread. And everyone understood the same terrifying truth:

Lucien Duskgrave wasn’t done yet.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 875 words ]

Chapter 133

Lucien’s POV

As soon as Riley stepped into the bathroom. I turned toward my men without missing a beat

“Clothes. Salve. Surveillance, I ordered. “Last two hours. Every hallway. Every private room.”

They didn’t need clarification.

When a Duskgrave speaks, especially the Alpha Prince of Stormridge, you move.

+8 Pearls

Within minutes, everything was delivered to the suite—soft robes spun from moonweave **silk**, formulated for sensitive wolf skin. A case of high-grade healing salves, laced with wolfsbane extract for **inflammation** and rapid recovery. And a tablet with the hotel’s surveillance footage already queued.

I dismissed the rest.

I needed to see it with

**my** own eyes.

and the first flicker of movement sent a slow burn through my chest.

As I sat, the screen lit up,

Scarlett

Snarling like a feral pup, dragging Riley by her hair, expression twisted with malice.

And Ronan Duskcliff—gutless little **coward**—just watching. Not just watching. Shoving her. Locking her in. Feeding her to the pack like prey.

The next frame hit harder than any punch. Scarlett, ripping apart the ceremonial embroidery from Matriarch Duskgrave’s **hand**. The very crest meant to be gifted before the Elders’ Council. A direct insult to our bloodline.

Then came the worst p

part.

Seraphina and her clique of overdressed vultures descending on Riley like she was meat left in the woods. Blows, claws, fury. And Riley—gods, she didn’t even fight back at first.

The rage coiled in my chest, silent **and** lethal. I felt my fangs begin to press **against** my **gums**. My grip on the tablet turned. nay knuckles bloodless.

Then I saw it

Ronan's face—split lip, blood dripping.

Good girl. I thought, pride and fury mixing like wildfire in my veins. She'd gotten one hit in. Just one. But I could smell it the shift in her. She wasn't going to be anyone's chew toy ever **again**.

I was about to rewind, to memorize every face **that would pay**, when the soft click of the **bathroom** door pulled **my** attention

I looked up—and **stilled**.

Riley

Wrapped in white, her **robe** clinging to her damp skin. Her hair, **dark and** still wet, framed her face like **ink** against

parchment. Her eyes, gods above—those **eyes** Tired, **wary**, but unbroken. **Long** lashes **still kissed** with water droplets. Her lips, toured Slightly swollen

My wall growled low inside me

The thought alone made my vision tint with red

Chapter 133

+8 Pearls

"Come here," I said. My voice was quieter than I intended, but it came out rough, commanding. There was no room for refusal

She obeyed.

Not out of fear, but instinct. The way a true she-wolf responds to a tether she doesn't fully understand yet.

She sat on the edge of the bed, fingers gripping the hem of her robe like it might shield her from the world.

Lapproached with the salve and **a** sterile pad. Dipped it. Reached for her face—and froze.

Her scent.

It wasn't just soap or oil or steam.

It was her.

Moonlight and moss, pine needles after rain. A scent touched by the gods, meant to haunt. It wrapped around me, quiet **and** constant, and for a moment, I just breathed it in.

-Lucien?" she whispered. Fragile, unsure.

I looked at her, the bruise blooming across her cheekbone.

"It'll sting." I warned, voice like gravel scraping stone. "Brace yourself."

I bent close. Closer than I needed to. I wanted her to feel my breath. My presence. I wanted the scent of me to wrap around her too.

The moment the salve met her skin, she flinched. Just **a** little. She didn't pull back.

I watched her lashes tremble. Her breath catch. The way she clutched her robe like it was **a** shield and I was the storm.

She didn't know it yet—but I was the **storm**.

And she was the only one I would ever protect from it

"Did **that** hurt?" I asked, my voice brushing her throat.

"N—**no**," she said, eyes darting away. "It's **okay**."

I murmured, "I'll be gentle."

I treated each bruise like it **was** a wound carved into my own flesh.

When I finished with her face, I didn't stop.

I took **a** towel. gently pressing it to her hair. Then I pulled out the dryer—Alpha Prince or not—and began drying it myself. My claws retracted as I ran my fingers through her damp strands, careful not to pull or rush.

She didn't flinch

Didn't protest

She just ut there, eyes closed, as if trying to memorize the feel of peace.

Sled never had this. That much was obvious. **No** one had ever treated her like she was so

And under my protection, no wolf would ever touch her again.

I wrapped a blanket around her shoulders once her hair was dry and **took a** seat beside her.

345 PM PP

Chapter 133

She turned her face toward me, **voice** like wind through ash leaves. “Thank you... **Alpha** Lucien.”

It hit me harder than I expected.

She hadn’t said it like a title.

She’d **said** it like a vow

+8 Pearls

I looked at her—not just as a victim or a survivor—but as mine. Not in **chains**. Not in possession. But mine in purpose.

She would not walk **this** road alone **anymore**.

She was pack.

She was Stormridge.

And anyone who **laid** a claw on her would feel the full weight of a Duskgrave’s wrath.

Ronan. Scarlett. Lee. Every smug **face** on that screen. They thought this night would end like the others.

But it wouldn’t.

Not with me here.

Not with Riley under my protection.

This was no longer about justice.

It was about retribution.

And I’d burn the world to give it to her.

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294

[ 918 words ]

Chapter 134

Riley's POV

+8 Pearls

I wasn't fully **awake** when Lucien helped me to my feet. My limbs still ached, bruises nestled deep in my muscles like **ghosts** refusing to fade. His low voice—"Sleep"—still echoed in my **mind**, soft as mist, heavy **as** a command. I remembered the **way** his fingers lingered on my temple, the weight of the blanket he'd wrapped around me. In those moments, I felt less like prey. more like something sacred.

But the moment we stood outside the banquet hall, **and** the heavy **double** doors opened again, the spell shattered.

**Lucien** stood beside me like a shadow at my back—solid, silent, eternal. He didn't say a word, didn't need to. His presence. alone pulled the room's attention like gravity. But this silence wasn't protection. It was permission.

It **was** my turn now.

The sound of our entrance echoed like a warning bell across the marbled floor.

And then the whispers began.

Gasps. A few stifled cries. I heard a crystal glass shatter to the ground.

Every head turned.

They had expected me to be gone. Destroyed. Disgraced. They **had assumed** Ronan had **taken** what he **wanted**. That I **had** crawled away afterward like some wounded Omega with nothing left but shame.

But I was here.

**And I wasn't** the same girl they remembered.

I wore the pale blue moonweave gown Mairiarch Duskgrave had given me with her own hands. The dress floated around my frame like starlight spun into silk, long enough to

cover the bruises that still **marked** my **skin**, but cut just high enough to remind them I **had** nothing to hide.

My hair was freshly dried, my **face** calm, **eyes clear**. They **couldn't** see the wounds beneath—but I knew they felt them. I carried them like a **second** skin, like armor. **And** with every step I **took**, the fear in their eyes deepened.

1

They **didn't** see Riley, the forgotten daughter of the Ebonclaw Pack, raised in the mud **and** blood of rogue camps.

They saw something else.

A storm. A reckoning

Their **past** sins, **wrapped in** flesh and **walking** toward them **with unshakable** purpose.

I heard the whispers swell, rising like a tide

“Is dit her?”

shar's supposed to be in the infirmary-

“Gods she looks like the Matnarch ”

Tharrys flicked between me and the man at my side. I ucien—taller than any male in the room, dressed us all black, his

ession carved in stone. He didn't speak He didn't glare But his silence dared anyone to look too long, to breathe the wrong way to question why he stood beside me.

They were afraid

Good

feri

Letter the clull of knowing they'd chosen the wrong side

Chapter 134

swept the room like a blade.

My gaze sa

It found Scarlett instantly,

+8 Pearls

She was still in her party dress, though the hem had bunched awkwardly from all her **padding**. Her heels clicked nervously against the floor as she turned, eyes wide, mouth slightly open. Her curls were no longer pristine—she'd run her hands through them too many times. Her mascara had smudged beneath her lower lashes, and her usual **mask** of arrogance was cracked.

For a moment, she froze.

Then—too late—she tried to compose herself, straightening her spine, tilting her chin, as if nothing had changed.

**But** everything **had**.

Lucien's voice broke the air like a blade.

"Miss Scarlett's hair looks a little messy."

His words were cool, precise, almost idle.

But in this room? It was the drop of blood in the water.

My **lips** curved—not **in** cruelty, but something colder.

I lifted **a** single finger and pointed toward her.

**Shave** it off"

I didn't shoul

I didn't need to.

In the silence **that** followed, my voice hit harder than a war drum.

Scarlett flinched like I'd **struck** her. "No! You can't—" she cried, but she barely got the words out before the **guards** moved.

Two of Lucien's pack warriors—storm—**black** armor, faces emotionless—stepped forward. Scarlett tried to **back** away. She clutched at a nearby chair, but they pulled her forward with effortless strength.

She screamed

They forced her to her knees at **my** feet,

I took my time **walking** toward her, each step **slow** and steady, the room splitting **open** like water before **me**.

**She** looked up at me, her lower lip trembling. Her voice **was** soft, pathetic: “Sister why? Why would you **have Alpha** Lucien

I smiled, just slightly.

“**You** still think this is his **command**?” I asked “**No**, Scarlett. This is me. My voice. My choice.”

Shock flickered in her eyes.

**And I in that moment, she finally** saw it **the** girl she thought she could **ruin** was gone. This was someone she now

“You tore the embroidery my mother left me. You dragged me into a room with Ronan Duskchft. You stood there while they

cat me **and you** smiled”

I took another step

“You wanted me broken. But you forgot something I leaned forward just enough for her to feel my breath.

I’m not yours to barrak.

345PM P. P.

Chapter 134

+8 Pearls

I turned to face the room—the women **who** had cheered Scarlett on, who had mocked me, struck me, spat on my name.

To those of you who raised a hand **against** me—your turn is coming.”

They lowered their heads, each one pale and trembling-

Scarlett wasn’t done.

Still clinging to the last tool in her **arsenal**—tears—she turned toward Lucien.

“Alpha... I didn’t mean it. She’s overreacting, she’s confused. I didn’t-

Lucien didn’t even uncross his arms.

“You’re beneath **her now**,” he **said**, voice like frost **cracking** stone. “Don’t waste your breath.”

The guards moved.

Scarlett screamed.

I didn’t look away. Not this time.

Because this wasn’t vengeance.

This **was** balance.

And as I turned toward the Matriarch’s empty seat, her final words echoed in

“Anyone who hurts my granddaughter... will pay.”

And they would..

Tonight, it begins.

I am Riley Vale.

Blood of Ebonclaw.

**my**

mind:

And I take back **everything** you stole from me—piece by piece, name by name.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 1,002 words ]

Riley's POV

+8 Pearls

sas

The moment the blade touched Scarlett's scalp, I **saw** her whole body jolt like she'd been struck by lightning. It **was as** if the cold steel **wasn't** just shaving away her precious hair—it was **scraping straight down** into her soul.

“Please! No! Don't-!” she screamed, thrashing in pure desperation.

Her cries echoed off the stone walls of the **grand** banquet hall, sharp and raw like a wounded **animal**. The sound might've made others **flinch**, but I stood firm, unmoved. I had been silent too long. Too many days, too many years. And tonight, I **wasn't going to look away**.

One lock at a time, her long, glossy black hair fell to the floor—those perfect strands she used to toss with pride every time she humiliated me. She treated them like a crown, a symbol of her status **and** superiority. But now, scattered at her feet, they looked more like the ashes of a fallen empire.

Scarlett writhed and fought against the guards holding her, but their grips were iron-clad. Her wild movements earned her a **nasty** scrape on the scalp, **and** blood trickled down the side of her face. It trailed over her pale skin in a crimson arc, as if **marking** her defeat for all to see.

Her scream—high-pitched and broken—split through the air. But I didn't flinch. I didn't blink. I didn't feel sorry. Not for a single second.

This was justice.

The room **had** gone deathly still. Those who once laughed at my humiliation now looked like ghosts, pale and shaking. Especially the women who had struck me alongside her. They stood frozen, unable to look **away** from the brutal scene, terror etched deep into every **line** of their faces.

Scarlett's beauty was her power. And I had just taken it from her with a single nod.

I didn't enjoy cruelty for cruelty's sake—but in this **world**, **wolves** only understood power. **And** if I didn't make an example of her now, they'd do it to me again.

Across the room, I saw Lady Lee—once smug, now hollow—collapse to the floor. Her legs **gave** out beneath her, eyes wide and vacant like her soul had fled the room. It probably had.

Then, chaos erupted.

Ronan Duskcliff—Scarlett’s supposed “protector”—charged through the crowd like a rogue without a leash.

“Stop Stop it now!” he roared, eyes wild.

He only made it halfway before **Duke** slammed a foot into his chest, sending him flying backward. He crashed to the floor with a thud that **made** the chandeliers rattle.

In a blink, two of Lucien’s men had him pinned **down, face** to the cold marble. He shouted and **thrashed** like a **madman**.

Lucien Dusk grave, **how dare** you treat Scarlett like this! I **won’t** forget this!” he bellowed, rage clouding every word.

Lucien didn’t even glance his way.

I did

And **when** he realized his words hadn’t rattled Lucien, he turned them on me.

“Kiley Stryer sister Your own blood! How can you just stand there and let them do this to her? What kind of person are

your

looking

Iced my head slightly, husking down at him with a calmness that **must’ve** driven **him** insane. “It’s been over a month, hasn’t

I said wuttly “Your stress **the** stundld be able to speak by now Did she **not** tell you who hurt her! Or did you never

Chapter 135

+B Pearls

His eyes went blank.

The truth hit him harder than any punch ever could.

He had **exiled** his own sister, shipped her off to another country—just so he wouldn’t **have** to hear the truth. Just so he could keep believing **that what** he did to me **was** justified.

Coward

“You don’t **want** answers, Ronan. You want comfort,” I whispered. “But you don’t deserve it.”

He snapped again. “I once considered making you my fiancée. A union between Ebonclaw and Blackmaw was meant to be How foolish of me to ever think you were the **one** I’d choose!, Riley! And you—you’re flaunting yourself with another man like some shameless whore!”

I almost **laughed**. “Fiance?” I echoed. “Is that what you call yourself now?”

His **words** couldn’t touch me anymore. I looked at him and saw nothing. Not even hatred. Just a pathetic, powerless man who thought he could shame me back into submission.

You want me to stop?” I asked coldly. “You want me to protect her? After what she did to me?”

His expression **twisted** in disbelief, but I didn’t wait for a reply.

Lucien’s

‘s voice broke the **tension**. “Too loud.”

Duke didn’t hesitate. He ripped off one of his socks and shoved it into Ronan’s mouth without so **much as** a blink.

The sight was almost comical—**this** once-proud heir gagging on the **stench** of his own desperation, restrained like the beast. he truly was.

He gurgled **and** thrashed, but the guards held him down like he weighed nothing. He couldn’t spit it out. Couldn’t scream. All he could do was watch—watch as Scarlett’s hair was stripped away strand by strand.

She collapsed when it was done, nothing left in her expression but hollow **shame**. Blood dried on her scalp, and the air **grew** colder

And then, silence.

I turned my gaze slowly toward the four **wealthy** women who’d helped Seraphina beat me. They **shrank** back, huddled behind their mates like cubs behind a den wall. I could smell the fear pouring off them.

One of them stammered forward, her voice cracking, “Alpha **Duskgrave**—we didn’t **know** she was your woman. If we **had** known, we never would’ve-

I stepped forward before she could **finish**. “So if I weren’t his, it would’ve been okay?” My **voice** was **calm**. **Even**. **But each** word sliced like a claw

She flinched, eyes wide, “N–no, I mean.. we just—”

“You think **rank** makes abuse acceptable!” I **said**. “You think I was less deserving of respect because I had no pack? No title?”

They had nothing to say

And that was the worst part. Because it was true.

They wouldn’t have cared if Lucien hadn’t claimed me. If Matriarch Duskgrave hadn’t wrapped me in that ceremonial cloak. In their eyes power was the **only** shield worth recognizing.

I wasn’t fading any more. I was weak. And tonight, **the** Stormridge Pack learned what happened when you strike a white wolf and leave her breathing

**You don’t** get forgiveness

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 746 words ]

Chapter 136

Riley’s POV

+8 Pearls

“1—it was just a misunderstanding!” one of the women stammered, her face stiff **with** a fake smile. “We heard she seduced Alpha Lucien and acted in the heat of the moment. It wasn’t personal! We meant no **real** harm—surely you **can** forgive that

**Another** immediately chimed in, nodding fervently. “Yes, yes, exactly. We were misled. Please, Miss Vale, we didn’t **know** who

you were...

Their mates—those smug highborn Alphas who **had** stood by **as** I was dragged and beaten—now stepped forward with practiced ease, their faces full of hollow remorse.

“Alpha Lucien,” one said with forced humility, “we’ve already scolded them. They understand they were wrong.”

Lucien didn’t respond.

So I did.

I took **a** single step forward. The echo of my heels on the **marble** silenced them faster **than** a roar ever could.

“Scolded” I repeated, my voice low, measured. “That’s your idea of justice? They shredded my robe. Left me bloodied and **exposed** in front of a pack of strangers. And you think a few hollow apologies will erase that?”

The women paled.

Their husbands faltered, unsure whether to beg or bargain.

Lucien stayed silent beside me, a looming shadow of power—but he didn’t interfere. Because he knew. This was mine.

“You should have thought of consequences,” I continued, gaze like a blade, “before you raised your hands against **an** Alpha’s daughter. Before you laughed while I bled.”

The first woman’s face crumpled. “Please, Miss Vale—**have** mercy. We know we were wrong!”

I tilted my head, letting the silence stretch. Letting their fear ferment.

“**You** all seem so sorry now,” I mused. “But I’m a believer **in** balance.”

They looked hopeful for a heartbeat.

Then I spoke again.

“**You** like using your hands so much? Then you’ll pay **with** one finger each. Ship them, too—let the rest of the world see **what** happens when wolves attack their own.”

Screams erupted instantly.

The women clutched their husbands in terror. **The** men began **shouting**, begging, stumbling over **one** another to shield their wives from the guards who stepped forward at my **command**

“No—please! That’s too much”

-Star didn't

"We'll pay any fine! Just not **that**

But I was done with tes

I was done with weak men and their excuses

Chor of the husbands dropped to lus kuces before Lucien—Alpha of Stormridge judge at war councils, and now, my silent

endurer

J45 PM p p

Chapter 136

+8 Pearls

"**Alpha** Lucien, please, this punishment is too cruel! My wife **was** ignorant. I'll offer compensation—land, silver, **whatever** you

Lucien arched an eyebrow. He hadn't moved. Hadn't even unsheathed a claw.

But his voice, when it came, was ice:

"You said anything?"

"Yes!" **the** man gasped. "Anything"

A pause.

"Even bankruptcy?" Lucien asked.

Dead silence.

Every breath in the banquet hall vanished.

Even the chandeliers seemed to dim.

The man froze, as if struck by lightning. The light in his eyes died a **slow**, sputtering death.

Wives could be replaced.

But an Alpha's empire? That was irreplaceable.

I saw the moment greed triumphed over love. The **subtle** clench of his jaw. The way **his** hand slipped from his wife's.

I gave a sharp nod. "Do it."

The guards surged forward. The women screamed, struggled, cried. Tears streaked their powdered faces, leaving **trails** of ruined vanity behind

They were dragged to the side of the ball and forced to kneel beside a long, polished table.

I followed.

One of the guards held down a trembling arm. Another placed a blade—silver—plated, ceremonial, glinting cruelly under the lights **onto** the polished wood beside it.

I picked it up.

It wasn't Lucien's hand that reached for justice.

It was mine.

I walked **toward** the first man, the one who had groveled **seconds** before, his eyes wide, sweat beading at his **temple** Toller

hum the blade

He stared at me as though I were a ghost..

"Discipline your mate" I said coldly. "This **time**, you'll take **responsibility**"

He reached for the knife with a trembling hand, but pulled back at the **last** second, too afraid to act

His wife subbed "Don't—don't do it! Just let them punish me, not you!"

He looked at her

Then looked at me

Then slowly—pathetically—offered the kude back

Chapter 136

I met Lucien's eyes, then turned to the guards, "Do it."

The woman shrieked as they forced her arm down again. I didn't look away—not once—as the blade came down

There was a cry. A splash of crimson.

A silence deeper **than** death.

Lucien stepped beside me, his scent like **pine** and winter steel, calm and quiet and deadly.

“You didn't flinch,” he murmured.

“I couldn't afford to.” I replied.

He said nothing for **a** while.

Then, softly. “They'll never forget this **night.**”

“No I said. “But neither **will** ”

Because this was the **night** I stopped being their prey.

The night Riley Vale reclaimed her place in the bloodline.

And I wasn't done yet.

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294

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 1,087 words ]

Chapter 137

Riley's POV

The woman's se

scream fore

through the banquet

hall like a howl under a blood **moon**.

Sharp Guttural. Animal,

+8 Pearls

**Then–thud.**

Her body seized once before collapsing backward in a graceless heap. She had fainted from the pain.

But mercy was a luxury she'd forfeited.

Without hesitation, **one** of the Stormridge guards stepped forward and hurled **a** bucket **of** ice water over her face. The sound of it splashing against her skin was crisp–**almost** theatrical.

She woke with a gasping jolt, only to lay eyes on her own bloodied hand. Where her thumb had once been, there was only ruined flesh, swollen and pulsing. Her shriek **this** time was weaker, hoarse, but no less full of horror.

The man who had done it–her husband–stood paralyzed beside her, the bloodied blade still clutched in his trembling hand. His pupils **had** shrunk to pinpricks. His knees buckled, and he crumpled with a sob, the knife clattering uselessly to the floor beside him.

His **tears** flowed unchecked. But I felt nothing. Not a flicker of guilt.

Around us, the banquet hall **had** gone deathly quiet. The scent of fear–sharp, sour, distinctly lupine–hung thick in the **air**. I could hear hearts pounding, lungs holding back sobs, the shuffle of expensive heels trying to edge toward the shadows

Not a soul dared to speak.

Not when the air was laced with dominance **and** retribution.

Not when Riley Vale stood with her chin raised and blood on her hands.

The other three couples looked as though the Moon Goddess herself had cursed **them** on the spot. The husbands shook like leaves in winter **wind**, their wives sobbing, clutching at each other, hoping in **vain** to become invisible.

**Lucien** said nothing. He didn't need to. **He** was my shield now but I was the sword.

They turned to me then. Not to him. To me..

“Miss Vale—please,” one of the **remaining** women **cried**, her voice **cracking**. “We didn’t know. We didn’t **mean** for it to go **this** far. Please have mercy!”

Another stumbled forward, nearly collapsing to her knees. “We **were** wrong. We admit it. You **want** punishment? Fine! Just not **like** this!”

I stepped forward slowly, the hem **of** my moon—blue **gown** whispering across the marble. Every eye **followed** me. Every heartbeat seemed to pause.

I looked down at them—those **same** women who had once looked at **me** like filth.

Who had torn my **robes**.

Who had struck me

and called me a rogue **niult**.

me

“You think mercy is yours to beg for? My voice didn’t tremble. “Where was **that** mercy when you pinned me down **and** laughed?”

They solidified harder.

4:45 PM p.p.

Chapter 137

+8 Pearls

One of the **husbands** tried to shield his wife, stepping in front of her like a knight made of paper. “We’ll do anything,” he pleaded. “Just name it.”

I smiled. Not kindly.

“You **said** anything?”

His eyes lit with fragile hope. “Yes.”

rawl”

“Good.” I said coolly. “Then **crawl**.”

Their expressions cracked. Shocked. Disbelieving.

You heard me. I continued, voice calm and brutal. “On your hands and knees. All of you. Snarl your apologies like the she wolves you pretend to be. Show your belly. Bare your throat. Then drag your tongues across this floor and scrub your sins. from it. That is the only redemption I will allow.”

One of the women sobbed, “That’s—inhuman.”

“No.” I said, eyes gleaming. “It’s wolf.”

The hesitation lasted less than a breath. Under the weight of my command—strengthened by Lucien’s silent **dominance** behind me they dropped. Four **high-**society women, crawling like mutts before the **pack**

They lowered their heads, bared their throats, and began to growl apologies—low, forced, **humiliating**. Their growls trembled with shame and terror. The sound echoed across the hall like a dirge.

Then they licked.

Tongues scraped over the marble. **Blood and** tears smeared into **the** polished surface as they dragged themselves forward **inch** by **inch**. For each step, they repeated broken apologies—snarling through clenched jaws, sobbing, sputtering as saliva and pride pooled at their knees.

I stood above them, unmoved.

Let every wolf in this hall see what true justice looks like.

Let them remember the sound of **groveling** socialites, once so high and mighty, now **licking** the floor beneath my feet like conquered bitches.

When they finally collapsed in exhaustion, I said **coldly**. “Take them outside.”

The guards didn’t throw them out like trash.

They paraded them

Made them crawl across the **banquet** carpet and into the open street, where the evening **pack** traffic **had** begun to gather Where **dozens**—hundreds of **wolves** could see **what had** become of them.

They didn’t shiniiek. They couldn’t. Their voices **had** broken **from** too much **groveling**

I didn’t need them to scream.

I needed them to be seen

Humiliated not just by **pain**—but by submission.

When the **doors** closed **again**, the hall exhaled.

A beat of silence

Then I turned my gaze to her

Chapter 137

The true orchestrator. The one who'd whispered **lies** and stirred cruelty with manicured claws.

She dropped before I could say a word, collapsing at my feet like her legs had vanished.

Miss Vale. I beg you. Please. I was wrong. I—I was jealous, and foolish and cruel, but I never meant to-

I raised a hand. She silenced instantly.

The sound of her knees slamming into marble echoed like a final verdict.

+8 Pearls

Blood oozed from her forehead as she threw herself down again and again in desperate bows. "Please please forgive **me**."

I **didn't** speak for a long moment. Just watched her.

Her tears meant nothing to **me**.

Her trembling meant nothing.

"I should make you howl your shame to every wolf in this city," I said coldly. "I should brand you."

But **just** before the **words** could leave my mouth, I stopped myself

Because Seraphina was still Lucien's blood.

**And** though she had betrayed everything her family should have stood for, I would not cross the line. Not this one. This was his Pack. His house. His shame to deal with.

I stepped back—not in fear, not in surrender—but in principle.

I turned to Lucien, my voice calm and **steady**.

“She’s yours.”

The weight of my words settled over the hall like storm clouds.

Lucien hadn’t moved through any of this. He had simply watched—silent, calculating **But now**, his **icy** gaze shifted toward Seraphina, and something colder than winter began to stir behind his eyes.

Seraphina lifted her face to **him**, blood and tears streaking her once—pristine features

“Lucien please.”

But his silence was deafening.

He stepped forward slowly, **like** the ude rising before it crashes.

“You dishonored the Duskgrave **name**,” he said, **voice low and sharp** as **broken** glass. “You lifted **claws against** my **mate**. **And** then **you** groveled **not because you** regret it **but because** you lost.”

Her breath hunched

can’t shout. He didn’t need to

“You **should** have **thought** of that before you shamed my blood,” he said icily

Then he looked to the guards.

“Take her to the private **lounge**. She still owes me more”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 957 words ]

Chapter 138

Lucien’s POV

+ Pearls

Duke gave a crisp nod before signaling to the Stormridge guards behind him. They moved instantly—two towering wolves in **dark** suits, each with the presence of a sentry **and** the strength of executioners.

Without hesitation, they seized **Seraphina's** arms like iron **shackles** snapping shut. Her screams erupted the moment **she** was tom away from the hem of **my**

y coal.

“No! Let go of me!” she shrieked, voice jagged **and** shrill.

Her feet kicked wildly, heels scraping across the marble floors, her manicured claws leaving screeching trails like an **animal/** dragged **to** slaughter.

The **hall** had been filled with **tension** before. **Now**, it cracked open.

**Seraphina** knew me. Far too well.

She'd spent over two decades in the Duskgrave family, playing the role of Luna with a **smile** stitched out of venom. And in those years, she had learned a hard **truth**:

If I dared do something publicly, it meant I'd already accounted for the consequences.

If I did something in private—well, then **there** were no limits.

Just like earlier. I hadn't lifted a blade **myself** when it came to those rogue wives—I'd simply made their husbands do it. Under **pack** law, **that** counted as nothing more **than** a domestic dispute. Nothing to investigate. Nothing to trace back to me.

I didn't have to leave blood on my hands. I left it on theirs.

That **was** the kind of Alpha I was. The kind **Seraphina** feared most.

“Lucien!” a voice rang out

Ford

My father in name only,

He stormed forward, his voice thick with fury and disbelief. “You can't do this. She's your stepmother!”

I turned my head slowly, meeting his gaze with **nothing** but frost.

“Oh? So attached, are we?” My voice was smooth, laced with cold steel. “Why don't you take her **place**, then?”

The air changed

It was subtle—like winter winds curling into the bones. Even the warmest corners of the banquet hall felt suddenly frigid, as if the blood moon itself had passed **over**

He flushed crimson, from his neck to his ears. Like a rooster cornered in a **pit** fight, too proud to admit he'd already

"You will not lay another finger on her," he bellowed. "No matter what she did. I won't allow it!"

He stepped in front of Seraphina, arms outstretched **like** a shield made of wet paper. He might've thought it noble.

I found it pathetic.

Seraphina's eyes lit with a flicker of hope. She glared at Ford's sleeves, sobbing like a **broken** thing. "Save me, Ford! Don't let

then take me

45 PM p.p.

Chapter 138

"So touching." I said **coldly**. "Fine. **Take** them both."

The guards didn't even hesitate.

+8 Pearls

Two of them stepped forward and seized Ford's arms. The **man** resisted, twisting and jerking, **barking** threats **that** fell flat in the ears of wolves **who** no longer saw him as their leader.

"I'm your father, Lucien! **You'll** regret this!"

"**Mother!** Are you just going to stand there and let him betray his blood?!"

His words were meant for my grandmother—**Matriarch** Duskgrave—who had been watching in silence from her chair of carved obsidian. The regal lines of her face twitched, **but** she said nothing.

Only when I glanced her way did she finally open her mouth.

"Lucien..."

“I know what I’m doing, Grandmother.” I said, my voice respectful but firm.

‘She exhaled a long, slow sigh. Then she nodded once and closed her eyes again.

She understood.

She remembered.

She was there the day my mother died—driven to madness **and** despair by the woman Ford now cradled in his arms. Seraphina **hadn’t** just taken her place. She had spar on **her** memory.

I’d been five years **old**.

A child.

But even then, I had picked up a knife.

To barged into their wedding chambers, ready to kill both of them.

The adults pulled me away before I could land the strike—**but** not before I made a promise **that** silenced the entire house

can kill you now, and the law won’t **touch** me. I’m too young.

I’d **said** that with blood in my eyes. **And from** that moment on, Seraphina had never stopped trembling in my presence

Not even now

The doors to the **private** room slammed shut. Moments later, the screams began

**Seraphina’s voice** tore through the silence, a raw, animalistic wail **that** sent a ripple of unease through every noble in the

Then came Ford’s **voice**—rage turning into panic.

**The** sounds from behind the door grew sharper, crueler **Crashes** men Bones, maybe I didn’t need to **know the**

details

Eseryone the

They were frozen in place

Even Kaley—who stood at my side like a flame wrapped in **silk**—showed no reaction. She didn't need to

Because this wasn't about vengram anymore

3:45 PM

Chapter 138

Minutes passed.

D

+8 Pearls

Or hours. The screaming faded, leaving only the rhythmic thrum of blood in the ears of **those** who still had the nerve to

listen

Then the door creaked **open**.

**Duke** stepped out first.

Behind him, **Seraphina** was dragged into view—though “dragged” was generous. She was a heap of broken limbs, **her arms** and legs bent at grotesque angles, the bone clearly shattered beneath ruined **skin**.

Her face—once the pride of the Duskgrave household—was slashed beyond recognition. Blood dripped from her cheeks like tears. Her mouth, now a cavity of **raw** flesh, bled freely. Every tooth was gone. She couldn't even scream anymore.

She wasn't a Luna.

She wasn't even **a** wolf.

Just a **carcass** breathing on borrowed time.

Ford followed.

No injuries to the body, no visible marks.

But **his** eyes..

Empty. Hollow. Like a soul had been ripped from him and thrown into the Abyss.

The guards held him upright, **but** his legs had already given up.

There were no more protests.

No more pleads.

No more delusions of control.

Only silence.

The entire banquet **hall** had fallen **into** a frozen hush. Nobles stared, wide-eyed and pale. None of them would ever forget

And **that** was the point

I turned **my** eyes back to the gathering.

Let them tremble. Let them remember that the Duskgrave **name** meant something again

That I—Lucien Duskgrave—was no longer the boy with **a knife**.

I was the Alpha now

And there would be no more mercy

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 918 words ]

Chapter 139

Lucien's POV

+8 Pearls

Ford's lips **quivered**, but not a single word left his mouth. His entire body trembled as though gripped by an invisible frost, eyes glazed **over**, spirit hollowed out. Whatever dignity remained in **him** had long since shattered—just like his mind.

The damage was done.

Not to **his** flesh, but to the one thing wolves never fully recover from.

His spirit.

I took slow, measured steps toward the wreckage that lay before me—my once—proud father and the **woman** he chose over blood.

My shoes clicked softly against the marble, the sound crisp and elegant amidst the silence. I stood over them like the reaper over a battlefield, hands clasped behind my back.

“I suppose it’s lucky my **men** intervened,” I said, voice **light** as a breeze. “From what I can see, Lady Seraphina attempted to harm herself in a fit of emotional rage. Likely to punish her beloved mate

I offered a slight smile, almost gentlemanly. “Fortunately, **we** stopped her. Otherwise... who **knows** what tragedy might have unfolded?”

My smile didn’t **reach my** eyes.

It never did.

Around the room, I could feel their stares—eyes wide with disbelief, throats too dry to speak.

Oh, they knew.

They knew the truth, every last one of them.

But none had seen it with their own eyes. None had evidence. And in the world we lived in, without evidence, there was no

accusation

The rumors **had followed** me for years—“Lucien Duskgrave, the cold—blooded prince of Stormridge.” Tonight, **those** whispers evolved into truth. Reality had shown itself, brutal and blinding.

And every soul present realized one thing:

I wasn’t the kind of Alpha you crossed.

I tilted my chin and swept my gaze across the hall—slowly, deliberately, letting my eyes meet every face

Each noble dropped their gaze the **moment** our eyes **locked**. As if my gaze **alone** could summon fate,

Let them think that

Let them fo

Let it settle deep into their bones that Lucien Duskgrave—heir to Stormridge, born **under** blood moon **prophecy**—was **not** a male to provoke

du

I rassed une hund lazily, **as** if brushing away slust.

Take them back to Norturach,” I said

My guards obeyed without hesitation. They stepped forward and seized Ford and **Seraphina** again—no gentleness this time They dragged them like discarded reluse like prey unworthy of a second **look**

Seraphon’s broken body slid across the floor, leaving behind a streak of crunson **that** glistened under the chandeliers

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Chapter 139

+B Pearls

Ford? He didn’t resist.

He couldn’L

His eyes were still wide, unfocused, head lolling between his shoulders like a puppet with its strings cut.

The double doors shut behind them, **swallowing** their shame into the night

And the banquet fell silent once more.

But not for **long**.

Every gaze slowly, inexorably, turned to the two still kneeling before me.

Scarlett Vale and **Ronan** Duskcliff.

The traitors.

Scarlett trembled so hard her **shoulders** jerked with every breath. Her once-glossy **hair** was gone—shorn completely, her scalp raw and exposed to **the** air.

It had been Riley's command.

Not mine.

She **had** grabbed Riley's hair during a petty outburst. She thought it would go unnoticed.

It didn't.

But even that wasn't her real crime.

No, her real offense was **far** more vile.

She destroyed Riley's moon embroidery.

A masterpiece—months of effort and devotion, stitched by hand under candlelight and starlight. Every thread had been laced with patience, **pain**, and quiet power. It wasn't just art. It was a piece of Riley's soul,

Scarlett **found** it. **Tore** it apart with scissors.

She knew exactly what she was doing.

**And** that's why she was kneeling here now

I saw her lips moving—mouthing silent prayers to the Moon Goddess, to fate, to **anything** that might delay the inevitable.

She had good reason.

chair—pull warranted a shaved scalp, **what** did desecrating my **mate's** sacred work deserve!

She knew the answer

That was why her breathing came in shallow gasps. Why her **knees** knocked against the floor. Why she shook **like** a leaf trapped in frost

Beside her. Honan looked no better. The once-proud heir of Duskcliff House was sweating through his silk. His shirt clung to him soaked and rampled

I could see it in his eyes—the dawning horror that his hole power plays and **smug** manipulations had landed **hum** far beyond

He had supported Scarlett’s schemes

Chapter 139

+8 Pearle

And now he would answer for them.

I approached them slowly.

The sound of my steps—sharp, echoing—rang through the banquet hall like war drums.

Tap Tap Tap

I stopped just short of them.

They didn’t **dare** look up.

“You think yourselves wolves?” I asked, voice smooth and cold. “You think your games make you clever?”

Scarlett whimpered. Ronan lowered his head.

“You tried to humiliate my chosen mate. You destroyed what she created. And you conspired to fracture the unity of Stormridge Pack™

I reached into my coat pocket and pulled out my communication crystal—a direct channel to the Enforcers of the Lycan

Tribunal

Their version of law.

I tapped a rune, **and** the **glow** pulsed gently in my palm.

“This is Lucien Duskgrave,” I said. “Alpha **Regent** of Stormridge. I’m reporting two **nobles**—Scarlett Vale and Ronan Duskcliff -for willful destruction of a Luna-bound artifact and conspiracy against Pack unity.”

A cold silence followed.

Then the voice on the other end answered:

“Acknowledged Warrant confirmed. Tribunal enforcers will arrive within the hour.

I ended the call.

Then let my eyes drift back to the traitors kneeling before me.

“I could punish you now,” I **said** softly. “I could make you bleed for every stitch Riley had to sew. For every tear she hid when she found what you did.”

Scarlett choked on a sob. Ronan flinched.

“But I won’t.” I continued. “Because I want the entire **Tribunal** to see the truth. I want the **Elders** to pass **judgment** in front of all four Terniones

I stepped **back**

“And when they do—I will be there when your **names are** erased from the **Pack Registry**.”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 1,034 words ]

Chapter 140

Riley’s POV

+8 Pearls

The moment Lucien’s voice rang out, **the** entire banquet hall plunged into a stunned silence, followed by hushed gasps and

The accusation hit like a thunderclap.

Theft.

In pack law, that wasn’t a light offense—it was a serious crime, especially when the stolen item was considered a rare lunar heirloom. Minimum punishment? Three cycles in confinement. Maximum? Ten. Maybe more, if the Alpha decided to press the full weight of the Tribunal’s wrath.

And this wasn’t just **any** stolen object.

It was the Moonthread Tapestry. My Moonthread Tapestry.

The piece I had poured over three moon cycles **into**—spinning silver—dusted threads under moonlight, weaving each sacred glyph by **hand**, infusing every stitch with the traditions of our lost northern line. It **wasn't just** art. It was history. Memory. My pain turned into something beautiful.

And Scarlett had torn it apart like it **was** nothing but a curtain.

Whispers rippled through the hall. Every gaze flicked to Scarlett—formerly so proud, now **bald and shaking** on her knees beside Ronan Duskcliff. Her wide, hollow eyes betrayed the same thing everyone else was beginning to realize.

This **wasn't** just humiliation anymore.

This was justice.

Scarlett's lips parted in disbelief. She looked ready to faint.

I could practically feel her mind spiraling **into panic**—probably picturing the cold cells **beneath the** Tribunal's barracks, the scent of rusted **chains**, and the hollow-eyed criminals who never came back the same.

She should be afraid.

I know I had been.

Her body jerked violently, trying to twist **away** from the enforcers **flanking** her, but they didn't even flinch. They'd pinned rogues stronger **than** her without breaking a sweat.

"No! Please!" she screamed, her voice raw with desperation. "I wasn't **trying** to hurt anyone—I didn't **know** it was hers! I can pay for it! My parents—they'll send gold right now! Please, Alpha, I beg you!"

Tears streamed down her face, streaking **through** the dirt **and shame**.

didn't

But Lucien Lucien didn't even blink.

Instead, he turned to me

And just like that—his expression softened.

The sharp cold steel of his **anger melted** into something warm Gentle. Like he could fold the whole world into his hands if I

asked lam to

He looked at me as if I was the only one in the room

“As you **wish**, moonflower, he said quietly just for me. “Is this justice enough!

My throat tightened I stared up at him heart twisting

Chapter 140

He hadn't done this for politics

Not for power.

He did it for me.

+8 Pearls

To erase the echoes of what I had lost—those five miserable years stolen from me when I'd been locked away, falsely accused of the very crimes Scarlett had orchestrated. She'd watched me get dragged out in front of all our so-called family and laughed behind her dainty hand. While I screamed my innocence, she flourished.

Now she was the one in chains.

Now she was the one begging.

And yet I didn't smile.

I just nodded, voice barely a whisper, trembling with emotion.

**Yes.”**

A single **word**. But it carried everything I felt.

The pain. The relief. The vindication.

Lucien turned back without another glance at her.

**Beside** her, Ronan Duskcliff had been glaring at me **this** whole time—his eyes bulging with fury and disbelief, as if he couldn't **understand** how I could stand there and let **this** happen to his precious Scarlett.

He tried to speak—tried to **curse, maybe—but** the cloth stuffed in his mouth **made his** words a muffled mess.

“Mirrph! Mmm! Mhhmm!”

He writhed, eyes **wild**, **sweat** beading on his brow. Two guards struggled to keep him **still**.

Lucien’s –

Elias, looked down at him with clear annoyance. No sympathy. No hesitation.

Without a word, he lifted a boot and slammed it straight into **Ronan’s** abdomen.

Ronan’s body folded with a **grunt**, curling like a wounded pup. He gasped for air, eyes rolling back for a moment.

I felt nothing-

Absolutely nothing

Lucien moved next, stepping **toward** him like a shadow descending

His polished black boots clicked against the marble floor as he stopped before Ronan, then slowly raised his foot **and** hooked at under Ronan’s chin—lifting it just enough to **force** eye contact.

“Svarlett thought herself clever,” Lucien said coldly. “And you stood **with** her. **You’ll** follow her into **the** cells.”

Ronan’s pupils **slirank** to pinpricks. His entire body began to tremble.

Coward.

He wasn’t **shaking** like that five years **ago** when I **begged** him to listen. When I pleaded for him to believe I hadn’t pushed Scarlet down the stairs. When I cried, screaming **that she** had framed me, and he looked me in the eye and chose her

anyway

He didn’t then

was pathetic

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Chapter 140

+8 Pearls

## Good

Let hum rot.

Let him understand what it means to be voiceless. Powerless. Alone.

A ripple passed through **me**, like something old and bitter finally being laid to rest.

The doors to the hall creaked open, and the **Lycan** Enforcers arrived at last.

Dressed in sleek black leather, armed with lunar-etched restraints and icy efficiency, they spoke only briefly with Lucien before striding forward. Their leader, a broad-shouldered male with Tribunal sigils across his shoulders, **gave** a short nod.

Then they pulled Scarlett and **Ronan** to their feet and locked the cuffs around their wrists.

“No! No, please!” Scarlett sobbed as she kicked her legs and twisted like a snared rabbit. “I’ll do anything! Don’t let them take me—Riley, please! Please say something! I’m your sister!”

Sister?

Not anymore

She had burned that bridge the moment she framed me.

Her **wails echoed** as **she was** dragged across the floor, heels scraping like a child refusing bedtime.

I stood there, rooted, unmoving, **as** the chaos melted into silence.

**was** then.

For a moment, all I could think about... was

Five years ago.

Another banquet. Another crowd of nobles too eager to watch someone fall..

That time, I had been the one shackled. The one yelling, “It wasn’t me! It was Scarlett!”

I remembered the sting of my mother’s slap—the sound still thundered in my memory.

“You evil **thing**.” she’d screamed. “Framing **your own** sister like that. We saw you do it. Me **and your** father both.”

I remember how Scarlett had stood behind her,

smirk curling her lips when no one else was the same wide-eyed innocence she always **weaponized**. The same

Now the smirk was gone

And for the first time in years. I felt clean.

Tralaled slowly letting the moment **soak** into my skin.

Lucien came to stand beside me, his hand brushing mine

“I told **you**” he murmured. “No one hurts **you** and walks away”

I looked up at **him**—my **shield my** justice—and finally allowed myself to **smile**.

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[ 902 words ]

Riley's POV

+8 Pearls

Five years ago, Scarlett was the star of the Moonfeast Ceremony. The pack's golden girl. The treasured little princess of the Ebonclaw bloodline. **And** I was the dirty secret they locked away—the trueborn daughter **cast** out in favor of a wolf with prettier lies.

Now, five years later, the tides had turned.

Scarlett's wrists were bound in **wolfsilver** cuffs, her face pale and streaked **with** mascara as the enforcers dragged her out of the banquet **hall**. Her screams rang in my ears **like** a long-awaited melody..

Beside her was Ronan Duskcliff, his usually proud jaw clenched shut by the stifling humiliation. The sock they'd gagged him with had been ripped out by one of the officers. As they passed, he shot me a look of stunned betrayal.

“Riley,” he growled, his voice raw **with** disbelief. “How could you turn into this? I'm so disappointed in you. Don't expect my forgiveness.

Forgiveness?

I blinked slowly at him, my pulse as steady as stone. I had survived five years in the Iron Cells while he played Alpha's golden heir and pretended my blood meant nothing. He watched me fall, and now he thought his forgiveness **was** a gift I should

crave!

What kind of delusion was that?

"Ronan," I said, my voice low and cold, like the snow-tipped peaks of Winterhowl, "has anyone ever told you that you're like a dying moonflower?"

I reached out and casually wiped my finger across the crimson wine that had bled onto the banquet tablecloth. The color reminded me of blood spilled unjustly. My blood.

"Still dressed in petals of nobility, trying so hard to shine. But at your core? You've already rotted."

He flinched. Good.

**Five years** had turned me **into** something harder. Sharper. Stronger. While he remained a coward hiding behind the comfort of lies.

ay from him, uninterested in **hearing another word**. I'd **wasted too** many breaths on men like him.

I turned away

Out of the corner of my **eye**, I **saw** him **glance** at **Lucien**—Lucien Duskgrave, the **Alpha** Regent of Stormridge, now standing silently by my side. The tailored lines of his suit hugged his broad frame like armor. His presence **was a blade sheathed in** velvet, cold **and** elegant. Ronan's gaze lingered on the way Lucien's hand lightly brushed my lower back, protective. possessive, unapologetic.

Jealousy darkened Ronan's **face**. I saw it—the fury that he'd lost something he thought was his, though he never truly **claimed** me, never truly saw me,

But he wasn't **part** of my **world** anymore. He never had been.

The enforcers dragged him and Scarlett **away**, their protests falling on deaf ears. No one in the banquet hall dared stop it. Not after what Lucien had revealed. Not after what they had done to me

And just like

in the room slufted

Tengon melted Conversations cautiously resumed Heads turned in **my** direction—not with pity, but with reverence Awe The women stared at me like I **was** the herome of some ancient legend, the men gave Lucien wary, respectful nods: They’d all seen what power looked like—anal what it protected

Soon the gifs began flowing again, brought forw and in ornate boses lined with velvet and wollhan silk.

The Pack Matriarch Lucien’s grandmother, sal regally at the head of the banquet, smiling **as** she accepted each present with

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Chapter 141

soft words and knowing eyes.

**And** then it **was** my turn

I took a breath, but it **caught in** my throat.

+8 Pearls

Every step I took toward her felt like I was carrying the weight of those five years in the Iron Cells with me. Not just shame, but something more dangerous. Guilt.

When I finally stood before her, I bowed my head. “I’m sorry, Matriarch.” I whispered. “It’s my fault. I wasn’t able to protect the moonthread embroidery Lucien commissioned for **your** Lunar Jubilee,”

The painting wasn’t just a gift. It had been mine. I’d spent countless nights crafting it by hand—each moon—thread stitch woven **with pain** and hope. My own tears had soaked into that cloth more **than** once.

**And** Scarlett had destroyed it.

Not by **accident**.

But because she knew it mattered to **me**.

In the short time I’d been in the **Duskgrave** estate, the Matriarch had treated me not as an outsider, but like family. She’d ordered the healers to tend my leg, sent rare root tonics to help repair the damage wrought by prison chains. She’d ensured.

warm **meals** reached my quarters, made by her own chef. She never looked at me like I was broken.

She called me beautiful, even when the mirror showed me scars.

She

called me kind, even when my soul burned with **rage**.

She said Lucien was lucky to **have** found me—**when** I'd been told all my life that I was cursed.

I swallowed, lips trembling. "I failed **you**. I'm sorry."

The Matriarch stood slowly and came to me, her hands soft as she clasped mine. "No, child," she said. "You did nothing wrong. The ones who wronged you are the ones who should feel shame. The gift may be gone—but your heart was in every stitch. I felt it. And **that** is enough for me."

Tears pricked at the corners of my eyes. My chest clenched painfully. She was too kind. Far too kind to someone like me.

But before I could compose myself, Lucien's voice cut through the hall like a blade.

"It was

s your mistake."

The Matriarch's head snapped toward **him**, eyes wide with shock. I could almost hear her internal gasp—he's so blunt, doesn't he see how crushed she **looks**?

were on me, unreadable but intense.

But Lucien didn't flinch. His

s eyes were on

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[ 812 words ]

## Chapter 142

### Lucien's POV

My grandma shot me a **glare sharp** enough to skin flesh from bone.

+8 Pearls

If looks **could** kill. I'd have dropped right there in front of the entire pack, **the** proud Alpha Regent of Stormridge felled by a slip of a she-wolf with tearstained eyes and a mouth too honest for her own good.

But I didn't flinch.

"I'm sentencing you to redo the embroidery," I said coolly, lifting a brow. "You're not to leave the estate until the piece is

finished."

Riley's eyes shot up to mine, shimmering and damp, like twin moons on the verge of drowning. Something flickered inside me at the sight—something warm and unwelcome, curling under my ribcage and tightening **its hold**.

Damn it.

I tugged at my collar, the silk of my shirt suddenly too close, too stifling. My tie felt like a leash **I didn't** remember fastening. I could feel my pulse in my throat.

She didn't argue. Didn't pout. Just gave me the smallest nod, lips parting **as** she rasped out a soft, "Okay."

Like I'd offered her freedom instead of a sentence.

The corner of my mouth quirked, unbidden. Not a full smile—gods forbid—but a crack in the armor nonetheless.

She really **was** easy to fool.

She is still as innocent as when I first saw her in the hospital corridor.

I narrowed my eyes slightly, letting them roam **across** her features. Delicate. Pale. A wolf too breakable for this world—but she'd survived hell and somehow walked out looking untouched.

Deceptive, that kind of strength.

The **Matriarch was** watching me from her seat like a hawk, and I could almost hear her **thoughts: That** boy is finally catching on. Took him long enough to mark what's his.

She wasn't wrong. Though my way of marking wasn't the **usual** fang-to-neck display. I preferred mine through inked contracts and locked doors, a **quiet** kind of **claiming**

A binding **she** didn't even notice until the threads wrapped **around** her throat.

1

Eventually, I was dragged off by a **throng** of **councilmen** in **charcoal** suits, the **kind that** reeked of politics **and** pertune. Numbers Trade deals Pack alliance **talks** I listened, responded, made the right expressions.

But my mind wasn't there

It was on her

When I finally turned back toward the banquet hall, something made me pause

There

the second-floor terrace, curled like a **lost** cub against the **iron-railed balcony-**

was her

Riley

She was alone. Her body slumped forward, her head resting on folded arms, her hair catching the moonlight like silver thread. She looked small Breakable

My chest tightened again, the same damned tug I'd been feeling since the first time I caught her scent in that corridor

I walked to her in silence, not caring that I'd left **my guards** and andes confused behind me

Chapter 142

+8 Pearls

Up close, I could see the red mark on her cheek, left by resting too long against her sleeve. Her breathing was shallow but even. She hadn't stirred.

I hesitated

Touching her **always** came with consequences—for both of us.

But then the wind shifted, and I caught that **faint**, lingering scent of blood and crushed herbs—her scent—and the decision made itself

I took off **my** coat, wrapped it **gently around** her shoulders, **and** bent down.

She, murmured something I couldn't **make** out, then leaned instinctively toward me, curling slightly as if seeking warmth.

My arms moved without thought. I lifted her easily, **cradling** her to my chest, careful not to jostle her sleeping form.

She fit against me perfectly.

Like she belonged there.

Like the gods had carved **that** spot out just for her.

As I turned to leave the balcony, footsteps approached from the far end of the hall. I didn't have to look to know who it was.

“Alpha Regent, my assistant—Duke, the nosy bastard—grinned far **too** widely for his own good. “You're really **taking** care of Miss Riley, huh? If I didn't know better, I'd say you were-”

“Careful.” I warned, voice **low**.

He paused mid-step. “What? I was just going to say you were fond of her.”

I tilted my head, casting **him** a look that made younger wolves flinch. “**And** I was just about to say your bonus this quarter **has** been revoked.”

His jaw dropped. “Wait, what-

“For speaking without permission.”

“Alpha Regent,” he groaned. “I **just** replaced my boots. You know I was counting on-

“Speak again.” I said, arching a **brow**, “**and** I'll revoke your sock stipend too.”

He **shut** his mouth instantly, **sulking** like a pup denied dinner.

I smirked

The memory of Ronan Duskcliff with Duke's **sock shoved** in his mouth was still fresh in my **mind**, and spirits above, it was satisfying. The arrogant **mutt had** finally gotten **a taste** of helplessness.

Maybe next time, he'd think twice before trying to ruin what belonged to me.

Because Kiley!

She did

Even if she **didn't** realize it yet

I slotted her gently in my arms, her head resting against my chest now, a soft sigh escaping **her lips as** if she could sense the heartbeat beneath her ear

Inglatened my hold and kept walking

Let the world stare Let them whisper.

Stormindge i future Laura had been humiliated, exiled, and forgotten.

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 837 words ]

Chapter 143

Lucien's POV

"My Alpha, about the socks... **Can** I get reimbursement?"

"Approved," I said flatly.

+8 Pearls

Duke grinned like I'd just **handed** him a promotion. "**Alpha**, you're the most handsome man in the world in my eyes."

"Keep talking and you'll be the only one left at headquarters doing overtime."

He snapped his mouth **shut** immediately and trailed behind me in silence, practically wagging his **tail**.

The night outside had thickened into a pitch-black shroud, stretching across the mountains like a predator on the hunt. Streetlights flickered like distant embers, and the moon hung low—nearly full, silver and sharp like **a blade**.

The black Rolls-Royce gleamed under the lights. My driver noticed us and quickly stepped forward, holding the door open with practiced precision.

I adjusted the girl in my arms. Riley. Her name lingered in my mind like a forbidden spell.

She was curled up against my **chest**, soft and limp, completely unaware of the storm she slept through. Her breathing was steady, almost fragile, and her lashes fluttered against her cheek like trembling feathers.

I hadn't meant to carry her this far.

I should've let one of the omegas take her to her room, but something about her asleep like this—so vulnerable, so trusting—kept my arms locked in place.

Then, out of nowhere, a shadow lunged at us, slicing through the warm amber glow of the overhead lamps.

A fist came flying toward my face.

It never reached me.

There was a sickening **crack** as Duke intercepted the attack **midair**. Bone snapped. The assailant let out a low grunt of pain and collapsed to one knee, breath hissing through clenched teeth.

“Lucien Duskgrave!” the man spat, struggling in Duke's grip. “What the hell is wrong with you? You crippled my parents! You sent my sister to prison! **What** more do you want from us?”

I narrowed my eyes, my senses sharpening. **That** voice was painfully **familiar**.

“Kael Vale,” I said slowly, **recognizing** the man beneath the disheveled mess.

Once the proud eldest **son** of the Vale **family**, now reduced to **a** shadow—his tailored suit wrinkled beyond saving, collar torn, his face gaunt and peppered with stubble. He looked like he hadn't slept in **days**. The **bags** under **his** eyes **were so dark**, **it** looked like someone had socked him in both eyes.

Thereby registered his presence before Riley stirred in my arms.

**She** let **out** a **small** whimper, her brow twitching. Then her lashes fluttered **open**, and her eyes—still glazed with sleep—met

Shut

She **blinked** rapidly, taking in our closeness, the warmth of my embrace. And then **she** saw her brother—bruised, raging.

chackled in Duke's hold

**"Alpha** put me down" she said softly, almost shyly

Thesitated

Chapter 143

But I felt her tense. The moment between us shattered. I let her slide from my arms.

She smoothed the folds of her dress, clearly flustered, and avoided my gaze. The cold air rushed in between us.

+8 Pearls:

Kael saw it **all**. **The flicker** of something tender **that** passed between me and his sister. His jaw tightened like a coiled spring.

"Riley!" he barked, voice hoarse **and** cracking. "Mom and Dad are still in **the** hospital! You're standing beside the bastard who had their legs broken—and you're acting like it doesn't matter!"

Riley's expression didn't change.

She stared at her brother with a calm that unnerved even me. No tremble. No panic. Just a deep, bone—deep weariness in her

gaze

"Family?" she repeated, as if tasting the word for the first time. Her voice **was** soft, but it cut sharper than any dagger. "When have I ever had one?"

Kael froze.

"I was just your burden. A stain on your perfect pack reputation. You used me, abandoned me, and when I **finally** had something of my own, you let them take it from me."

He opened his mouth. **Nothing** came out.

Riley stepped forward, just once.

“I’ve been beaten, locked up, and left to rot. For what? Loyalty to a name that only brought me **pain**? You want to talk about **family**, Kael? Family doesn’t throw their **own** into a prison cell. Family doesn’t let their adopted rogue daughter take my place and watch silently while I disappear.”

Her words were steady, but I could hear the strain. I knew the signs—every wolf in **this** cursed world had their **limit**. Hers had been broken a long time **ago**.

I stepped forward, my voice like ice.

“You should be **glad** it was only your parents’ legs.”

Kael turned toward me, eyes bloodshot, body trembling.

“You like her, isn’t it?” he hissed. “You think this justifies what you did to **us**?”

I **took** a step closer, each movement deliberate, **exuding** the quiet power that had made entire **rogue** packs submit without a

word

Kael flinched even if he tried to hide it. He wasn’t used to looking up at someone who could end him in a single breath.

“She’s under my protection,” I **said**, voice low and clear. **That means** anyone who lays a **hand** on her—anyone **who** schemes behind her back, **locks** her up, starves her, humiliates her—answers to me.

Karl’s mouth twitched. “**You think because** you’ve **got** power, you can just rewrite what’s right and wrong?”

I

“No,” I said. “I **think** because I **have** power, I don’t need to explain myself to people like you.”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 895 words ]

Chapter 144

Riley's POV

+8 Pearls

I've already **paid** with a broken leg and a stolen organ," I said quietly, voice like steel wrapped **in** silk. "That **should** be more **than** enough to repay them for the so-called 'gift of life.'"

Kael—no, I refuse to call him my brother anymore—stared at me like I'd slapped him. The **words** weren't meant to wound. but they cut deep anyway, slicing through the falsehoods he still clung to like a coward hiding from a storm.

The truth had long been exposed, and I had no intention of dressing it up anymore.

But still, he tried. He pointed at Lucien like **an** animal backed into a corner. "You'd really choose to stand by him?" His voice trembled with rage. "You're **siding** with the very wolf who had our parents' legs broken? Riley, what the hell is wrong with you?!"

I **didn't** answer **right** away. Maybe because, deep down, I didn't know how to explain it in a way Kael could understand. How do you explain falling for someone whose entire being **is** carved out of fire **and** fury, and yet somehow still manages to **hold** you like you're made of **glass**?

Lucien wasn't perfect. He was lethal. And maybe **that's what** made me feel safe.

But silence, to someone like Kael, was as good as **an** admission.

"You've lost your damn mind," he spat, the veins in his neck bulging, face red with disbelief. "You're a full-grown **she**-wolf now. Can't you tell right from wrong?"

He stepped forward, fists clenched, rage boiling just beneath his skin. "They had their legs broken, Riley! Can you even imagine how much pain that is?!"

I laughed.

I didn't mean to,

It just slipped out..

But it wasn't joy. It wasn't mockery. It **was** something colder—emptier.

"Can I imagine the pain?" I repeated, lifting my gaze **and** meeting his eyes.

Kael's breath **caught in his throat** the moment he looked down and remembered. His eyes flickered to my leg—the one that never healed right, the one **that** reminded me every **damn** day of what I'd survived.

Yeah, I could **imagine** the pain **just** fine.

"I **don't** need to imagine it," I said, **voice** calm but laced with **venom**. "I lived it."

Karl took a **shaky** step back, the wind knocked from him by nothing but my words. **His** mouth opened, but whatever excuses he was ready to conjure died on his tongue.

"I don't believe Lucien had anything to do with what happened to **your** precious parents," I added, casting a sideways **glance** at the man who stood beside me like a shadow I'd chosen for myself

Lucien's expression was unreadable—stone—**faced**, composed—but his eyes glittered **with** something **warm** Something dangerous.

"With me? No he **said**, almost amused. I've been with Riley all day. **Ask** Duke."

Duke, ever the obedient beta, nodded eagerly "Our Alpha hasn't left her side. I'd bet my tail on it

We turned to the driver, and Lucien gave him a sharp nod. The driver didn't even **blink**. "The Vale **couple** slipped down the steps outside the hotel Accidental fall. **Broke** both legs

My eyebrow arched.

Jou w

Chapter 144

Lucien tilted his head slightly.

Even Duke paused **mid**—breath.

Seriously?" I muttered.

"Absolutely." the driver said without missing a beat. "I witnessed it."

+8 Pearls

Karl exploded. "Bullshit!" he roared. "Those steps are barely ten high! No one breaks both legs falling from **that!**"

“You don’t have to take my **word** for it,” the driver said, **still** maddeningly calm. “Ask the guards. They were watching.”

A small group of security guards had clearly been eavesdropping **and** now stepped forward, their faces full of strained professionalism **and** fake smiles.

“We all saw it,” the captain said quickly. The elder Vale couple took a tumble. Clean fall. No one touched them.”

“Yep, echoed the rest. “Totally saw it. Self–inflicted.”

Kael’s mouth opened and closed, disbelief etched into every angle of his face. He looked like a wolf whose world had just spun off its axis.

I let my lips curve into a cold, cruel smile. I wasn’t proud of it but damn, it felt good.

“Familiar feeling, isn’t it?” I asked softly, stepping toward him. “When everyone around you spins the same lie, and no matter how much **you** scream the truth no one listens.”

His

eyes w

widened in realization, the

memory

of

five years ago crashing over him like a tidal wave.

Back then, it was Kael and his perfect little Vale family, lining up to lie. Dismissing **every** word I said. Ignoring the bruises. Ignoring the pain.

Back then, I screamed too.

No one listened.

Tonight, I didn’t have to scream.

Kael staggered back, looking around for something–anything–to prove he wasn’t insane. His gaze locked on a security camera high on the wall. His eyes lit up with desperate **hope**.

Then Lucien **spoke** Calm. Low, ley.

“My people clean up after themselves,” he said, **his** tone like a **blade** sliding through silk.

The implication landed like a death sentence. Even if there was footage, it was gone.

Just like the footage five years ago **that** could’ve saved me.

The **faint** sound of water **splashing** behind us drew **my** attention. The fountain lights had come on, illuminating the koi fish below **like** tiny golden ghosts.

Lucien idly turned his **ring** around his finger, then flicked a glance at the driver.

“Well done” he **said**. “Double **your bonus** thus quarter”

The driver grinned. Thank you. Alpha. Then, turning to me, **he** added with a **wink**, “I owe this one to **you**. Miss Riley”

Karl looked like he might actually fain from rage.

You, you mona

His words trailed off, swallowed by the **night** and the low **hum** of the city

[ 838 words ]

Chapter 145

Kael Vale’s POV

Her eyes didn’t flinch.

Not a single flicker of emotion. Not even disgust. Just.... nothing.

I stared at Riley like a desperate man clinging to a cliff’s edge, hoping for a hand that would never reach **back**.

+8 Pearls

Once upon a time, those eyes were filled with light whenever they looked at me—pure, unguarded, full of the kind of admiration a little sister had for her big brother. She used to run to the door when I came home, barefoot on cold **floors**, always smiling, always eager

“Kael, you’re home! You must be tired. Sit down, let me rub your shoulders!”

Those memories used to warm me. Now, they burned like acid in my throat.

What the hell had I done?

I struggled beneath the boot pressing against my back, trying to push up, trying to lift my head to meet her gaze, but Duke the bastard assistant—held me firm like I was nothing more than a rogue caught stealing from a pack's **food** store.

I looked up from the dirt like a dog begging for scraps.

"Riley." I choked, throat dry, pride bleeding out of me by the second. "I'm your brother. You're really going to stand there and watch an outsider treat me like this?"

She didn't answer.

**She** didn't even look at me.

She stood there, spine straight despite her thin figure, calm and detached like a Luna **handing** down judgment to a disobedient warrior. There was no softness in her anymore. No trace of the girl who once cried **when** I scraped my knee, or **clung** to my arm during thunderstorms.

This Riley? She was cold steel forged in fire. A she-wolf sharpened by betrayal.

**And** for the first time, I realized she wasn't pretending.

She had truly, completely, **shut** me out.

My throat tightened with something I couldn't name—rage, maybe, or grief—but it curdled inside me, bitter and sharp. I couldn't let it end like this.

"Forget **our** parents for a second." I snapped, my **voice** breaking with fury. "You let them **shave** Scarlett's head **like** some **damn** prisoner, **you** know how much she values her appearance! And you still have the nerve to stand there like you've done nothing wrong?"

I emphasized the words—"like always—because I needed to believe she hadn't changed. That the version of her I remembered was still somewhere inside. That if I pushed hard enough, maybe she'd crack

She didn't

"You think I did it?" **she** said quietly. "Then fine. Let it be so

No anger. No defense. Just quiet **dismissal**. It landed harder than a slap.

I clenched my fists, the need to scream **building in my** chest. "You won't even deny it??"

She just looked at me Like I was a stranger shouting in the streets.

“You **thank** this is over! Im going to get Scarlett out of that hellhole she didnt **want** your stupid embroidery. You ruined it yourself and blamed her because you’re still the same vindictive little-

46 PM P P

Chapter 145

+B Pearls

“Enough,” she cut **in**. Not **with** words, but with movement.

She turned to the man beside her. Lucien Duskgrave.

She tugged lightly on his sleeve. “I don’t want to talk to him anymore. Let’s go.”

**Lucien** looked down at her, and damn it all, the expression on his face made my skin crawl.

Wolves like him weren’t capable of gentleness.

**And** yet, he looked at Riley like she was something sacred. Untouchable.

“Get in the **car**,” he said softly.

She obeyed, moving **like** mist—graceful, quiet, gone.

A driver—one of Lucien’s people, no doubt—stepped forward and carefully shielded her as she entered the vehicle, even adjusting her gown so it wouldn’t snag.

I lost it.

“RILEY!” I roared; struggling against Duke’s hold. “GET OUT HERE! YOU THINK YOU CAN JUST LEAVE?! YOU THINK YOU CAN LET SCARLETT ROT IN JAIL WHILE YOU RIDE OFF WITH A MURDERER?!”

Lucien turned then. Slowly. Like a predator bored of playing with its prey.

He stepped toward me, towering like a stormcloud with eyes.

He grabbed my jaw in one hand—his grip was cold, strong, inescapable. **I had** no choice but to meet his gaze.

His **eyes** were black. Not from color, but from weight. Depth. A bottomless cold that I felt in my bones.

“You care about Scarlett?” he asked, voice soft but slicing. “You love her, little Vale?”

I recoiled, **blinking** rapidly, heart thundering in my ears. “What–What are you talking about?”

He smiled.

Not kindly.

“Disgusting.” he murmured. “Absolutely disgusting”

I didn’t know if he was mocking me... or if he **saw** something I’d been too afraid to admit, even to myself.

How absurd. How utterly insane.

Like Scarlett She was my sister. My little sister,

Not by blood, no—but what did **that matter**? I grew up with her, protected her, **watched** her cry, laugh, grow.

I treated her like family Like my own blood.

W

that **a sin now**? Was caring for her suddenly something dirty and shameful?

Lucien let go, **and** I stumbled back, fists clenched, heart pounding with fury. My **knees** hit the cold ground, **but** I didn’t feel the pain

All I could feel was the burn of humiliation rating me **alive**

The pack shadows moved around me, brushing **past like** I didn’t exist

I looked up one last time, just in time **to** see Riley’s silhouette vanish behind tinted gl

Than

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 707 words ]

Chapter 146

Riley's POV

The car door **shut** with a heavy **thunk**, **sealing away** the cold, the **chaos**, **and** the brother I no longer recognized.

+8 Pearls

Lucien slid **into** the seat beside me, the leather creaking beneath him, and the air instantly filled with the quiet dominance of **an Alpha**. His presence **always** shifted the energy of a room—or in this case, a car. But tonight, I didn't flinch. I didn't shrink **away**. I was too exhausted to keep pretending I wasn't broken.

He didn't say anything at first. He didn't start the engine. He just **sat** there beside me, one elbow propped against the window, his face half-shadowed by the dim overhead light.

My **hands** were clenched in my lap, bloodless and white. My nails were digging into my palms so deep I thought they might draw blood.

"Riley, Lucien said at last, his **voice** low, calm. Not the cold tone he used in court. Not the aloofness he wore like armor. This was something gentler. "**Are** you okay?"

I shook **my** head, barely. "I'm fine."

He exhaled through his nose, clearly not buying it. "You don't have to be. Not right now."

My lips trembled, **and** I bit down hard to steady them. "He said I was evil. That I hurt his family. That I ruined her life."

Lucien's **jaw** tensed.

"He doesn't remember," I **whispered**. "He **doesn't** remember what they did to **me**. Or maybe he does, and he just doesn't

Silence stretched between us.

Then, **without** warning. Lucien reached out **and** pulled me against him.

I stiffened—just for a **second—but** then my body **gave** out, slumping into the solid warmth of his chest. His **scent—pine**, wind, and something faintly smoky—wrapped around me, grounding me in a way I **hadn't** expected.

“**You** were brave,” he murmured near the crown of my **head**. “**I saw** the way you looked at him. You weren’t **afraid. Not** anymore”

“I’m tired of being afraid.” I whispered.

He rested his chin lightly on my **hair**. “Good. Because I don’t want **you** hiding anymore.”

His words echoed inside me.

I don’t want you hiding anymore.

For a **moment** we just sat there. His heartbeat **was** steady beneath my cheek, the **kind** of rhythm **that** made you forget the world could hurt you

Then he pulled back slightly, enough to meet my eyes. His gaze **was steady, serious**.

“Have you thought about going **back** to school?”

The question caught me off guard “What?”

“Ashirpoor Academy.” he said. “You always wanted to go there, didn’t you?”

My breath hatched I hadn’t heard that name in years. **Not** since before everything went wrong

Before prison

Before Scarlett

Chapter 146

Before I lost everything.

“My voice faltered. “That dream **died** a long time ago.”

+B Pearls

Lucien’s eyes darkened. “Dreams don’t die. They **just** get buried **under** the weight of pain and fear. But they’re still there, You’re still that girl who wanted to be a combat instructor. I know you **are**.”

I looked **away**, my throat tightening. “Even if I wanted to, it’s too late. My record—my name—it’s ruined.”

He smiled, **slow and** sure. “Luckily, you know someone who **has friends** in high **places**.”

I blinked. “You mean...?”

“Ashmoor’s head combat **trainer** used to be my professor,” he said. “**Alpha**–level, war–tested, and loyal to **a** fault. If I asked she to take a look **at** you, she **would**. No questions asked.”

My heart began to beat faster, “You’d do that for me?”

“Riley, you have to believe in yourself. Even with a vital organ missing, you were still able to summon your wolf. You’re stronger than you think. You belong on the battlefield–not trapped inside the Vale family.”

Lucien leaned in slightly, eyes burning with something fierce. “Riley, I would tear down kingdoms for you.”

I didn’t know what to say. **The** Riley from six months ago would have cried. She would’ve sobbed and begged for this chance. But I wasn’t her anymore.

I **had** steel in my spine now. Pain in my blood. And a **future** I’d thought I would never get back.

“Do I have to say yes right now?” I asked quietly.

“No,” he said. “But if you want it–if you want **to** fight for it–I’ll be there. Every step of the way.”

I looked down at my hands. The same hands that had bled for a family who never wanted me. That had fought to survive behind bars. That had stitched together hope, thread by trembling thread.

I nodded once.

“I **want** to fight”

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Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[ 813 words ]

Chapter 147

Kael Vale's POV

+8 Pearls

I watched as the black SUV disappeared into the night, its red taillights cutting through the darkness like a wound that would **never** close. I couldn't move. My knees buckled beneath me, and I collapsed onto the cold pavement, my breath **coming in** shallow gasps.

Riley was gone.

And this time... it was final.

She hadn't **even** looked back.

I'd spent years convincing myself that blood meant something, that what we had—what we used to have—was enough to keep her tethered to me, to this cursed family. But I was wrong.

I'd destroyed it all. With my own hands. With my cowardice.

By the time I managed to drag myself into my car, my fingers were numb from the night air. The engine roared as I sped through the darkened streets of Stormridge, pushing the limits just to feel something, anything beyond the gnawing pit **in my** chest.

When I arrived at the hospital, the air reeked of antiseptic and pain. The sharp, anguished cries coming from the Ebonclaw Pack's private ward nearly split my skull open.

My parents' morphine had worn off.

Father's **guttural** screams shook the walls. "Pain pump! Give us the damn **pain** pump, now!"

Mother was curled in a fetal position, tears streaming down her cheeks. "I can't—I can't take **it** anymore," **she** sobbed to the nurse hovering helplessly at the foot of the **bed**.

But I couldn't let them have it. Not yet

Not after everything

I stormed into the room, and before the nurse **could** even lift the **pump**, I growled, "No. Don't touch them."

My voice came out raw—**more** feral **than human**. The nurse froze, wide-eyed. My father's **pain**—flushed face turned from pleading to furious.

“Are you insane?” he barked “You want us to die in agony?”

A bitter **laugh** tore out of my throat. I didn’t even know where it **came** from. It just burst out—loud **and** cracked and manic.

I was losing i

The sound of shattering **glass** rang out **as** I swept an entire tray of medicine off the cabinet, sending **glass vials** scattering across the tide like spilled blood.

The room went silent.

All eyes on me

“You know who char had to suffer without a **pain pump**?” I **roared**, **chest** heaving.  
“Riley. In a rogue prison. With her leg chattered, her bones protruding and no one to even set jt”

Father fine bed

She lay in a cell bleeding and broken, because of you. Because of Scarlett. Because you chose your precious adopted daughter over your blood”

Mothers hp trembled “Karl she’s always been so stubborn Always starting highs—of course she got herself hurt You know

lip

Chapter 147

+B Pearls

how girls like her get treated in prison. She brings it on herself.”

“Brings it on herself? My voice cracked. “You think she chose to be beaten until she **couldn’t** walk? That she wanted to lose everything? Her education? Her future? Her **dignity**?”

Mother covered her face and sobbed, and for a brief second, guilt pierced through me.

But then I saw Riley’s face again—pale, drawn, eyes dead with exhaustion, **standing** behind Lucien Duskgrave like he was the only thing left keeping her upright.

She didn’t cry. She didn’t scream. She ju

just looked at me like I **was a** stranger.

**A** stranger she loathed.

“She’s gone,” I **said** quietly. “She’ll never come **back**.”

Father tried to sit up, teeth clenched against the pain. “Don’t be dramatic. She’s a selfish brat, always was. Everything was fine until **she** started making trouble.”

“Fine” I spat. “You blackmailed her into **taking** the fall for Scarlett. She had a full scholarship to Ashmoor Academy—do you remember that? She could’ve been a battle instructor by now. But instead, she spent five **years** in that hellhole so you wouldn’t lose face in the Pack Council.”

“You’re being ridiculous,” Father hissed. “Scarlett didn’t even **want** that stupid embroidery **award**. Riley must’ve sabotaged it to make her look bad.”

I turned to him slowly.

“You think **this** is about a piece of thread?” My voice dropped to a whisper.

“**You** think **that was** her breaking point? Do you **have any** idea what it does to a person to be discarded like garbage by the ones she called family?”

They stared at me, stunned into silence. For once, the **two** of them didn’t have a response.

“She doesn’t want **anything** to do with us now,” I continued, almost calmly. “And I can’t blame her.”

Mother whimpered. “But we raised her...”

“**You** raised her to serve. To be lesser. You paraded Scarlett around like a **daughter** of honor and shoved Riley into the **shadows**.”

“She’s not even our blood-

“She’s my sister.” I growled. “And whether or not she ever forgives us, she deserved better than what you gave her.”

I couldn’t **look** at them anymore.

I turned **and** walked out, leaving their broken bodies **and** worse, their excuses, behind me

Let them suffer for one night. Riley **had** suffered for **years**.

Let them scream:

Let them feel what it was like to be **unheard**

Because I finally understood **what** she'd felt all along

And by the Moon. I'd never forgive myself for being part of it

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[ 830 words ]

Chapter 148

+8 Pearls

Third Person's POV

Kael Vale's fist came down hard on the **metal** side **table**, the loud clang echoing off the sterile **walls** of the Stormridge Pack infirmary

'n'

His father flinched at the outburst. Even while confined to a hospital bed with both legs broken, Alpha Alaric still tried to keep his spine straight, his **jaw** clenched **in** defiance.

"Don't forget," Alaric snarled, voice hoarse with pain and rage, "you were the one **who** testified against Riley at the High **Tribunal**. You were the one who pointed the finger, Kael. Don't you dare try to pin this on me and your Luna."

Kael **froze**. His heart pounded like a war drum. Those words hit harder **than** any blow his father had ever struck him with.

How could he forget?

The memory was carved into his bones—standing in that cold courtroom, Riley's golden eyes burning with disbelief **and** betrayal as he, her own brother, had declared her guilty. Even then, a part of him knew the truth. But he hadn't fought **for** her.

"You think I don't remember?" Kael growled through gritted teeth. His canines **sharpened**, claws flexing involuntarily as his **wolf** stirred beneath the surface,

agitated by his guilt. ‘Every night, I hear her screams from that cell. Every Damn. Night. You think these broken legs are punishment? No. They’re karma.’

He turned his cold, furious gaze on his father. “You destroyed her. And you made me help.”

Luna Zara, lying in the next bed, winced. The pain in her legs must’ve flared again, but it was nothing compared to the look she gave her son—equal parts disgust and disappointment.

“How dare you speak to your Alpha that way,” Alaric spat, his pride still more intact than his bones, “You’ve been brainwashed by that girl—she’s nothing but a defect. A stain on the Ebonclaw bloodline.”

“Don’t call her **that**, Kael hissed. His voice dropped low, a predator’s growl rumbling in his chest. “Don’t you dare.”

**Alaric** surged forward, ignoring the agony in his **legs**. Veins bulged in his neck, face red with fury. “Get out! Get out before I make you!”

**but** Kael **didn’t** move. He stood still, like a monolith carved of stone and regret.

Alaric’s breath became ragged, his body trembling from both pain and rage. His eyes fluttered, **and** for a moment, Kael thought he might faint. A sliver of satisfaction curled in Kael’s gut.

Was that **wrong**? Maybe.

But **watching** the Alpha who’d once ruled their pack with an iron fist now reduced to this—**sweating, gasping**, helpless—it felt like a sliver of justice.

“You two did everything to break Riley,” Kael said, quieter now. “**You** framed her. You locked her **away**. You let Scarlett take everything that should’ve belonged to her **and you** expected her to **thank** you?”

**Luna** Zara’s voice quivered. “We were just trying to **protect** the pack.”

Karl scoffed. “**No** You were trying to protect Scarlett. The perfect laughter. The **fake** one”

Zara’s eyes welled with tears. “Scarlett never wanted to **hurt** Riley-”

She let Riley take the fall for her Kael snapped. “Don’t act **like you** don’t know **that**.”

Zara fell silent. Her hand clutched the bedsheet **tightly**, knuckles white. The silence thickened until she finally **spoke** again, this time with a tremor of maternal worry

“Marder’s returning from Northhaven today She’s coming to pay respects to Matriarch Dusk **grave**. You need to call her. Tell

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+8 Pearls

Karl blinked “What?”

“If Riley sees her,” **Zara** pressed, “she’ll retaliate. You know how she is—vengeful. She’s dangerous now,

Alaric grunted in agreement. “Scarlett’s still **weak** from her **last** recovery cycle. She **won’t** survive another confrontation

Kael stared at them. The same parents who once celebrated Riley’s birth with pride now feared their own daughter like **a** rogue beast.

Good. They should.

He thought of Scarlett’s bruised face **back** in the tribunal’s holding **cell**. He **hadn’t** dared tell Zara what had happened. That Riley had left those bruises after Scarlett begged for mercy. **That** it had **taken** three Enforcers to pull her off.

His voice **was** flat when he **said**. “I’ll think about it.”

Without waiting for another word, Kael turned and left the room.

Each step out of that infirmary hallway felt heavier than **the** last. He wasn’t sure if it was guilt... or something deeper. Regret had hollowed him out, and now all that remained was duty.

He stepped into the fluorescent-lit corridor—and stopped short.

Theo **Hale** stood near the exit, arms crossed. The **silver** Omega’s **sharp** eyes locked on **him**.

“Kael, Theo **said**. “You’re leaving **already**?”

Kael nodded. “I’m going to find Riley.”

Theo’s expression didn’t change, but his stance **straightened**. “You **know** where she is?”

“No. But I’ll find her.”

There **was** a **pause**. A beat of understanding passed between them—both men bound to the same girl in different ways.

“I’m coming with you, Theo said.

Kael narrowed his eyes. “Why?”

“I need **answers**,” Theo replied. “About her past. Her **medical** history. Her missing records. **And I think** she’s the only one who

has them”

**Kael** studied him for a moment. Then nodded.

They didn’t trust each other, not completely. But they both trusted Riley **more than** anyone else. **And** maybe, for now, **that** was enough

Together, they left the infirmary **and vanished**

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[ 845 words ]

Chapter 149

Lucien’s POV

+8 Pearls

Ashmoor Academy was nestled in the cradle of the northern highlands, its ancient stone towers wrapped in a steady mist that smelled of frost, pine, and old magic. The kind of place built **not just to train** warriors—but to forge legends.

But as I pulled the car into the gated drive, my eyes weren’t on the battlements or the looming archway that bore the academy’s sigil.

They were on the girl sitting beside me.

Riley had been silent most of the ride. Not the tense silence of a girl plotting escape, but the **kind** of quiet that came from exhaustion—the bone-deep weariness of someone **used to fighting** alone.

I didn’t press her.

Not yet.

The moment we **arrived**, an attendant escorted us to the academy's medical wing. I'd called ahead. Told them Riley needed a full exam before we made any decisions about her training path. I might've pulled some strings. Technically, the chief combat instructor was semi-retired.

But for me, she made an exception.

She always did,

"Lucien Duskgrave," said **a sharp voice** as we entered the white-tiled room. "Still dragging half-dead wolves through my doors, I sec.

I smirked. "**You** love the drama, Maeryn."

Warden Maeryn Voss snorted as she stepped forward, her cane tapping with authority on the cold tile. Her hair was silver-white and braided back in **a warrior's twist**, her broad shoulders still carrying the posture of a frontline general. Despite the crow's feet **around** her eyes, the force of her presence crackled like live wire-old magic wrapped in a lifetime of battlefield instinct. She **wasn't** just Ashmoor's senior instructor—she was its legend.

Her gaze landed on **Riley**, appraising and **sharp**.

"You must be the Vale girl," she said, not **unkindly**

Riley shifted uneasily. "Just **Riley**."

Maeryn gave a short nod. "Come. Let's see **what** the world's carved out of you?"

She led Riley into **a** side chamber

I waited in the hall, pacing. **Minutes passed**. Then **nearly** an hour

Finally, the door opened.

Maeryn stepped out first, her expression unreadable.

Riley followed behind her, eyes distant, face pale

Something in my chest tightened

I stepped forward "What is ir

Marry'ni looked at me with an intensity I hadn't seen in years. "You were right to bring her here. But it's worse **than** I thought"

I tensed "Tell me everything"

She gestured me into her offer Riley remained behind in the **waiting** room perched **silently** on the edge of a bench like a

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+ Pearls

wraith made flesh

Once inside. Maeryn closed the door and dropped her usual steel facade.

"She's bleeding magic," she said without preamble. "Or rather—her wolf is,"

My heart froze. "What?"

She tapped a glowing diagnostic chart **laid** out across her desk. It shimmered with faint blue runes, a spectral image of Riley's wolf form projected in pale light.

"She's unstable. Her wolf is severely weakened, barely anchored to her physical form. The **reason?**"

She pointed to a **faint** distortion on the image's lower right quadrant.

"She's missing a vital organ."

"A kidney," I said grimly.

Maeryn nodded. "Correct. Her **human** body has learned to cope, but her wolf? Her wolf is still bleeding. You of all people understand how spirit and body must remain in harmony for a shifter to function at full strength"

I clenched my fists. "What does that mean for her training

"It means she's not ready. Throw her into high-impact combat drills now, and she could collapse **mid**-shift. Or worse—her wolf could try to tear **away** from her, instinctively seeking safety."

She paused, then added in a quieter voice, "And Lucien.... even in this state... she still managed to summon her wolf"

I looked up sharply.

Maeryn's voice lowered **in** awe. "Do you **understand** what **that** means? I've trained thousands of warriors. I've seen Alphas lose their shift over emotional trauma. But Riley... she's incomplete, fractured—and her wolf still came when called. That kind of soul-bond doesn't just survive. It fights. She's rare, Lucien. One in a thousand."

I exhaled slowly, her words landing like hammers.

"She's meant **to** be on the battlefield," Maeryn said. "But not like this. She's fire wrapped in broken bones."

"Is there a way to fix it?" I asked.

"There is," she **said**, expression hardening. "Find the missing piece. Her wolf is searching for it. If we **can** locate the kidney—if it's still viable—we might be able to graft it back. A spirit-bound transplant. Difficult. Dangerous. Not exactly legal. But possible"

My throat tightened "Can I tell her?"

"**You** should. But be careful with hope. If the donor was unwilling or if too much time **has** passed there may be no reclaiming it. If it was sold, altered, discarded—there's a hundred ways this **could** go wrong

I stood up, mind racing

hallway. Riley lifted her head when I approached. Her eyes were searching mine before I even **spoke**.

"So I

she asked her voice trying for steadiness. "Am Lin!"

I sat beside her, close but not touching

"There's a complication." I said quietly. "Your wolf she's **weak**. That's why your shifts hurt. Why you're tired all the time. It's

Her hips parted slightly "So I'm not strong cough

and closer, letting th

rai pu my voice do what my hands **coulda** 1. "You're stronger than anyone I've ever met. But your wolf complete you had a kidney removed didn't you?"

Chapter 150

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[ 630 words ]

Chapter 150

Riley's POV

Lucien's words echoed in my chest long after he stopped speaking.

I'll **find** it. **Even** if I have to tear the world apart to do **it**.

+8 Pearls

For the first time in years, someone was **willing** to fight for me. Not just beside me—but for me. And it wasn't out of guilt or pity. It was because he believed I was worth saving

The idea **was** foreign. Beautiful. Terrifying.

When Lucien stepped away to make a **call**. I found myself staring at the closed office door down the hall. **Behind** it, Warden. Maeryn Voss—the legendary combat instructor of Ashmoor—waited. She'd seen through me with a single glance. She'd read the truth of my wolf like a battlefield wound.

I stood.

**My** legs still trembled slightly, but I walked anyway. I wasn't done **hiding**—but I was done running

I knocked once.

"Come in," came the clipped voice from the other side.

**The** room was warmer than I expected—lit by a flickering fireplace and lined with ancient weapons, maps, and shelves stacked with dusty tomes. Warden Voss stood near the window, back straight, cane resting lightly in her grasp. She didn't look surprised to see me.

"Riley Vale," she said. "I figured you might come."

I swallowed, stepping inside. "I just wanted to **say** thank you. For.... telling me the **truth**. For treating me like I wasn't broken."

She raised an eyebrow. "You're not broken. You're battle-worn. That's different."

I let **out** a shaky breath. "I want to fight. I don't **want** to wait around anymore. Even if my wolf is weak, even if I'm missing a piece... I'm tired of being powerless."

Her gaze softened, just a fraction.

"You remind me of someone I trained long ago," she **said**. "He was raw. Furious. Always walking the edge of self-destruction. But **that** fire It kept him alive."

"Lucien I guessed.

gave a short, amused nod. "That pup was chaos in a **combat** ring. **You** should've seen the bruises he left **behind**. But he had something **most** others **didn't-resolve**. You have it too. And **once** your wolf **is** whole, I'll **train** you myself"

My heart skipped

"You inean uF

Marryn's expression turned serious "I don't make promises I won't keep. But I don't train cowards, either So if you're serious if you're willing to face the truth of what was **taken from** you—and fight to reclaim it—I'll be waiting"

She gudded oner "Then get **yourself** ready Vale girl. The battlefield's no place for hesitation

"Tilbe

I unanager a small situle. Til br back?

As left her office, the ache in my chest was still there but it was different now **Not** the hollow **throb** of loss

ssure of purpose

Chapter 150

Lucien was already waiting **near** the car, his coat met, there was no need for words.

He opened the passenger door for **me**.

+8 Pearls

dusted with fine **snow**. He looked up as I **approached**, and when our eyes

The **ride** down from Ashmoor was quiet, but not **heavy**. The silence between us had shifted. It wasn't filled with ghosts

anymore.

Just the flicker of something new.

Maybe hope.

We **drove** through the thickening dusk, **pine** trees blurring past the windows, the sky turning a **deep shade** of indigo. And when the towering silhouette of the Duskgrave estate finally came into view, nestled in shadow and stone, I didn't feel the usual spike of dread that came with approaching unfamiliar territory.

I felt something strange.

Safe

Lucien parked the car and glanced at me before cutting the **engine**,

"You're quiet," **he** said.

"I was just thinking..." I turned to him. "Thank you. For taking me to Ashmoor. For not giving up when I would've."

He studied me for a moment, then gave a rare, crooked smile. I told you, Riley, You're not alone anymore."

I opened the door, the cold air wrapping around me like a second skin. And as I stepped onto the Duskgrave grounds for the second time, I realized something

This wasn't the end **of** anything.

It was just the beginning

Send Gifts

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