

A Broken Alpha Heiress' Revenge

[781 words]

Chapter 151

Third–Person's POV

+8 Pearls

The moon hung low over the northern woods, shrouded by a thin veil of cloud. The trees lining the road swayed restlessly, their branches whispering secrets in a **language** only wolves could understand. Inside the black SUV speeding down the gravel path, silence stretched taut between the two men in the front seats.

Theo Hale gripped the steering wheel with **one** hand, the other drumming impatiently **against** the window frame. Beside **him**, Kael **Vale** sat stiffly, eyes glued to the darkness beyond the windshield, lips **drawn** in a hard line.

They were on their way to the Duskgrave ancestral home—a place rarely visited by outsiders, let alone disgraced heirs like Riley.

But that wasn't what preoccupied Theo's mind.

It was a document he had stumbled **upon** three weeks ago while auditing medical archives for the Ebonclaw Pack's internal health registry. Most of the files were **routine**—vaccination records, bloodline verifications, combat injuries. **But** one name had caught his eyes

Riley Vale.

She had been just fifteen.

And she'd been in the pack hospital for a renal compatibility test.

Theo hadn't been **able** to stop thinking about it since.

At fifteen, Riley had just returned to the Ebonclaw Pack. Fresh from the Rogues. Unclaimed. Unwanted. The pack elders barely acknowledged her existence. So why had she been taken in **for something** as serious—and specific—as a kidney match

test?

And if she had only gone in for **testing**... why did her current medical records show she was missing a kidney?

That **wasn't standard**. That wasn't something you just forgot.

"Why would a girl like her be evaluated for organ donation?" Theo muttered under his breath, more to himself **than** to Kael.

Kael, preoccupied, didn't respond. His brows were furrowed deep in thought, and his hands were clenched into fists on his lap. He'd barely spoken since they left the hospital—only mentioned that they were going to find Riley

And that this time, he wasn't going to fight her

He was going to beg

The idea of Karl Vale—once the heir of the Ebonclaw Pack, always proud and cold—lowering himself to beg his sister for anything, would've been laughable if the circumstances weren't so grim.

Theo gave him a sideways **glance**. "So let **me** get this straight. You're going to **ask** Riley to help clean **up** Scarlett's mess?"

sighed, his voice rough "Scarlett **was** arrested. Theft. Apparently Riley reported her for stealing some **ancient** embroidery worth twenty million*

Theo's eyebrows shot up "Twenty million Goddess. **That's** ridiculous."

"Exactly" Kael said, his voice rising "Riley's being petty. **We** all know she's still mad about the past, but dragging Scarlett into

this! It overkill"

Theo gave a dry laugh "Pentyr You think being sold **out** and imprisoned is something people get **over** after a few **years!**"

el looked like he was about to argue, but then thought better of it

The didnt press further He didn't care to debate **inorality** with someone who hadn't lived Raley's nightmare

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Instead, he returned to his thoughts.

Riley's kidney

Her weakened wolf.

+8 Pearls

He hadn't told anyone yet, but **when** he compared the hospital logs from Riley's time in the infirmary, he noticed something even more disturbing.

The timing

Riley's compatibility test had happened just one week **before** Scarlett underwent a mysterious "life-saving operation" **that** the pack never spoke of in detail. The files surrounding Scarlett's case **were** redacted—**even** for someone like Theo.

It didn't take a genius to connect the dots.

Theo's jaw clenched.

"Tell me something." he said suddenly, breaking the silence. "Why was Scarlett in the hospital a year after Riley came home? Didn't she have some kind of emergency surgery?"

Kael shifted. "Yeah, some autoimmune **thing**. Her kidneys were failing. The elders said it was hereditary

"**And** she made a full recovery?"

Kael nodded. "She bounced back within months. Stronger than ever."

Theo said nothing, but his chest tightened.

Because someone else paid the **price**,

He had no proof Not yet. But his **instincts** screamed it: Riley hadn't just been mistreated. She'd been used. Treated like a resource. Like livestock. They'd taken her in not out of guilt or obligation—but because they needed something from her.

And she'd given it, willingly or not.

"Hey," Karl **said**, his tone lighter, trying to shift the mood. "Don't act like this is your battle. I'm the one who screwed up with Riley. I'll talk to her. You're just along for the ride."

Tiseo forced a smile. "Yeah. Just here to make sure you don't run your mouth and get **kicked** out."

Kael chuckled, the first real sound of amusement he'd made all night, "**Fair.**"

But Theo wasn't laughing.

Because he had too many questions and not enough answers.

And deep down, he had the sinking feeling **that** the secret buried inside Riley's missing kidney—her fading wolf—might be the key **to** unraveling everything the Ebonclaw Pack **had** tried to cover up

And if that meant breaking some laws? Burning **down** old alliances?

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[1,062 words]

Chapter 152

+8 Pearls

Third Person's POV

Night fell heavy over the Duskgrave estate, cloaking the mansion in a **silence** that bordered on **reverent**. The moon hung low and pale above the rooftops, its light casting long, silver streaks over the carefully paved paths of the garden below.

ne in and Inside, **warm** light spilled from the windows of the second **floor**. Shadows danced behind the velvet curtains, moving out of the frame like ghostly figures

Lucien stood quietly outside Riley's room, a steaming **mug** of warm milk in his hand. The rich scent of honey and wolfmint curled **upward**. His **other** hand hovered near the door, hesitating—just for a moment—before knocking softly.

Once.

Twice.

Three times

No answer.

He frowned. Riley was rarely a deep sleeper, not with her instincts as **sharp** as they'd grown in recent weeks. He pressed the handle. The door opened easily **under** his touch.

Inside, the room was still. Quiet. A soft golden glow from the bedside lamp bathed everything **in** muted warmth. There, at the far end. Riley stood in a white nightdress, her figure outlined against the glass of the tall windows. She stared out at the garden, unmoving, her long hair drifting slightly in the **night air**.

Lucien's voice lowered. "Riley?"

She didn't respond. Not a flinch. Not a breath of acknowledgment.

Frowning now, Lucien crossed the **room**. He set the milk on her writing desk and moved toward her, the familiar tension of protective instinct pulling taut beneath his skin.

"Riley," he said again, louder now, firm but gentle. "It's late. You should rest."

Sull **nothing**

Only the sound of wind brushing **against** the **windowpanes**.

He reached out and placed a **hand** gently on her shoulder.

Riley jolted like she'd been struck by lightning.

Her body flinched away violently, and her injured leg **gave** out beneath her. She stumbled backward, off **balance**.

Lucien caught her before she could fall, his arm snaking firmly around her waist. Her hand clutched instinctively at his chest

she looked up eyes wide wild with a panic he hadn't seen in weeks

The softness of her frame trembled against him, **her** scent laced with **adrenaline** and something deeper—fear. Not of hum but of something long—buried

They stood their in silence for **several** heartbeats, neither speaking Only breathing

exact moment, a black Bentley pulled up outside the estate gates. The tires whispered across **the gravel** as the **engine** died Two figures stepped out

Kari Vale

And Theo Hale

wrapped

expression changed **instantly**

ats, they fa drawn. **But** when Karl looked up toward the second floor of the estate, lus

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Chapter 152

+8 Pearls

Behind the glass of the tall window, in the amber light of Riley's room, stond Lucien Duskgrave—his arm still wrapped around Riley's waist, their bodies close, too **close**. From that distance, it looked like an embrace. An intimate one.

Karl's eyes widened. Rage exploded in his chest like wildfire.

"Riley," he roared, his voice cutting through the quiet like a blade. "**You** shameless thing—who the hell allowed you to live under his roof?"

His shout echoed through the courtyard.

Theo's **head** snapped **up**, **his** gaze following Kael's.

He saw it too. The silhouettes. The closeness. The tension.

His **breath** caught, jaw tightening **as** he tried to comprehend what he was seeing. For a brief second, disbelief clouded **his** thoughts. But then came understanding—and with it, a complex storm of emotions he couldn't quite **name**.

Still, Theo, reached out and grabbed Kael's sleeve. "Wait. Calm down. You don't know the full story **yet**. There could be—"

"Full story?" Kael's voice cracked **with** fury. "Theo, look at them! Are you blind?"

Theo didn't answer. His eyes stayed on Riley's window.

Inside, Lucien was already helping Riley steady herself. His hands had never strayed from respectful. But the scene had been witnessed—and misread.

Kael, however, was beyond reason.

He took a step toward the estate gates, pointing upward as **his** voice rose to a roar, fueled by years of guilt, confusion, and wounded pride.

“Riley Vale, **have** you no shame left in your blood? Are you so desperate for a male that you’d throw yourself at a **Stormridge** Alpha like some heat–struck stray?”

The words sliced through the night like a blade.

Riley froze.

For a moment, at felt like **the** world stopped **breathing**. The hatred in Kael’s voice still rang in her ears, **each word** soaked in contempi, dragging her back into the **years of humiliation**, control, and whispered accusations **that had** once defined her life.

Her fingers clenched at her **sides**, **nails** digging into her palms. **But** this time, she didn’t **shrink**. She didn’t run.

She turned her head slowly **toward Lucien**, her brows **furrowed**, **voice** trembling—not with fear, but disbelief

Your the Alplu?” she asked, voice low but sharp, almost a whisper. “The one from the rumors?”

She stepped back half a pace, eyes narrowing **as** a bitter realization settled in her chest.

The one they **say** is **rudiless**—violent—and cursed? The very one the Vale family tried to force me into a mating **alliance**

with

Lucien didn i deny i

Instead, he took a **slow** step **forward**, has eyes locked onto hers, glowing faintly under the moonlight pouring through the

“Yes” he said quietly “That a me”

A shon later laugh slipped from Riley’s lips She shook her head in disbelief arms crossing protectively over her chest

in

“Well, that something she said sarcasm laced with fatigue “We almost went on a matchmaking meeting Vale **politics**

nurried

den's mouth curved

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"Then maybe," he said, **voice low** and sure, "that was the only intelligent decision the Vale family ever made."

Riley blinked, caught off guard.

+8 Pearls

He stepped closer, the storm in his eyes softening—just slightly. "Because I would have never let them hurt you again, Riley. Not once. Not if you'd been mine."

Lucien turned slowly toward the window, **still** standing protectively in front of Riley. His face remained calm—but the air around **him** shifted.

Power pulsed in the room. The **Alpha's** aura rising.

Riley, breathless, leaned heavily against the edge of the windowpane. She didn't speak, didn't shout **back**.

She didn't need to.

Because this wasn't the girl Kael Vale had once known. This was the woman who'd survived betrayal, captivity, and the slow rot of abandonment.

Lucien stepped forward, drawing the curtain closed with a quiet finality.

Outside, Kael stared at the closed window as if it had personally insulted him.

Theo placed a hand on his shoulder.

But Kael shrugged it **off**, eyes burning red under the moonlight. "He's seducing her. Manipulating her. Just like all those other wolves before him."

Theo said nothing.

Because deep down, a single **thought** was taking root—one he hadn't wanted to consider.

What if Lucien wasn't manipulating her?

What if she had chosen him?

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Chapter 153

Riley's POV

The silence came back like a ghost I **thought** I'd buried.

+8 Pearls

It started as a distant numbness—a soft ringing in the back of my skull—but quickly swelled into the kind of silence that pressed against my eardrums like a scream I couldn't hear. No footsteps. No wind. No voices. Just the cruel quiet I **thought** I'd left behind in prison.

Lucien had come in.

But I hadn't heard it. Not the creak of the **hinges**, not the sound of his boots on the floorboards. Nothing. His mouth **had** moved, his brows furrowed like **he'd** said something sharp. Urgent.

But I hadn't caught it.

Because I couldn't hear him.

My hearing had been failing more and more lately—especially when I was exhausted, when my wolf Nyra **was** too weak to hold it together. The beatings in prison had left more than scars on my skin. Sometimes it was like my **ears** just.. stopped working. **And** tonight, they had.

I didn't want Lucien to know. Didn't want to see **the** pity in his eyes, the way everyone used to **look** at me like I was broken beyond **repair**.

So I forced Nyra to rise, even though she barely stirred. I tapped into the dregs of her **power**, enough to **make** out fragments of **sound**—a muffled syllable here, the low hum of Lucien's voice there—but nothing clear.

It wasn't enough.

So I fell back on what I'd trained myself to do since prison: watch. Study. Read lips like my life depended on it.

Because it had.

And still does.

Lucien's lips moved again, and I focused hard, catching the shape of his words even **as** the world around us blurred into nothing.

I think he was asking if I was **okay**..

I didn't answer.

Couldn't

Not with **the** way my **throat closed** up, **the** way my chest constricted.

Then I heard it—sharp and sudden, slicing through the void.

Karl

His voice wasn't always clear to me these days, **but** when he screamed, when he **spat poison** into the air, somehow it still reached me

accuse that refused to die.

car to the Goddess Riley Vale! Keep whoring around **with that** Stormridge Alpha, **and** one day when you die in his bed, don't expect the Ebondlaw Pack to claim your corpse! We won't bury your shame!"

His voice thundered through **the** night, wild and unhinged, shattering the silence like claws raking across stone. I didn't need to look out **the** window to know he was outside. I could feel **his rage** pulsing **through** the walls like a storm begging for something to destroy.

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+ Pearls

But I didn't thuch. Not this time

Not when Lucien's arms were suddenly around me, grounding me with a steadiness I didn't know I needed His hand was pressed firm but gentle all of my back, holding me

against the close—too close. I could feel every inch of him through the flimsy fabric of **my** sleep shirt. The heat of his body, the power in his frame, the tension simmering just beneath his

He looked down at me, his gaze sweeping over my face.

And I... I just stood there. Watching him. Breathing him in. Trying to pretend the whole world wasn't tilting underneath

Irel

I shouldn't be here.

Not when I now knew exactly who he was.

Lucien Duskgrave.

The infamous Alpha of Stormridge.

The male with the curse in his blood and a body count in his past. The one they whispered about in Ebonclaw Pack halls like

a warning. A predator wrapped in velvet, cursed to bring ruin to every she—wolf who ever dared love him.

I knew now. The signs were too obvious. The surname. The stories. The rumors I'll once scoffed at and dismissed as campfire tales.

But he was real.

And he was holding me like I was something fragile. Precious.

And Goddess help me.. a part of me felt happy.

Happy

Even though I should've been terrified. Even though every instinct in me—every broken **shard** of logic—screamed **that**

was the moment to run.

Because this was the Stormridge Alpha with bloodied hands and a dark legacy.

But instead of fear, there **was** this flutter in my chest. This ridiculous little flicker of something I couldn't quite name.

Fate

No.

Something softer.

My heart raced like it wanted to leap straight out of my chest.

His scent was everywhere—cedarwood, smoke, and something **darker**, more dangerous. A scent that shouldn't have been. comforting, but was I hated how safe it made me feel. How easily my body leaned into **him**, like I didn't **know** better. Like I hadn't been taught what happened when **you** trusted the wrong **male**

Th—thank you” I murmured, barely louder than a breath—though whether he actually heard it or only saw it on my lips, I

didn't know

Lucien didnt say anything

I tried to step back, but my body wouldn't obey My legs were trembling, unsteady—especially the right one That old injury from prison was flaring up again, like at always did when I was on edge. I lost my **balance** for a moment.

Laren caught me instantly

He pulled me tighter against lum, enveloping me in warmth and something stronger—something that felt like protection. Not the kind that locked you in a cage for your own graad The kind that stool between you **and** the rest of the world **and**

darest it to try agai

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+8 Heads

† was small compared to him, almost swallowed by his broad frame. My lace was buried against his chest, only my wide. startled eyes visible as I **stared past** his collarbone.

He didn't loosen his grip.

Didn't move a muscle.

Lucien exhaled sharply, his breath brushing my hair as he pulled me closer, cradling me like I was something wounded but

The warmth of his embrace burned against the ice buried deep inside my chest.

I didn't want this. I couldn't want this. Not from him. Not from anyone.

Because no one stays

Because no one means it.

But Goddess, it felt good. To be held like this. To be looked **at** like I wasn't broken beyond repair.

He must've known **what I was thinking**. He always seemed to

But then—just **as** I thought he'd release me—be **didn't**.

Instead, he shifted closer and let his lips brush against the side of my **throat**.

Tune stilled.

A jolt shot through my entire body like lightning on a dry night. My breath hitched. My fingers clenched instinctively in the fabric of his shirt, trying to anchor myself, trying not to **unravel** completely

Lucien didn't **kiss** me—not really

It was a touch, **a** breath, a claim made without words.

And it set my whole body on fire.

I could barely breathe.

Downstairs, Karl's shouting had fallen silent—at least for a moment. But I knew he was still there. **Watching-**

Judging

This rage would only grow worse after this. He would twist this into something vile, something shameful.

But for once. I didn't care

For once. I wasn't afraid of what they thought

Not when Lucien held me like I was worth fighting for

his

Not when his presence was louder than their cruelty

Still, reality crept back in

I pulled away slightly. finally finding my voice, my shame, my trembling sense of control

Marien I whispered staring up at him "you you can let go now."

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Chapter 154

+8 Pearls

Third Person's POV

Outside the grand silhouette of Duskgrave Manor, Kael Vale stood rigid, fists clenched at his sides, amber eyes blazing with fury. His **usually** aristocratic composure had shattered completely the moment he saw what was happening inside.

His **voice** cracked through the night like a whip.

“Open the door! Now!” he roared, storming up to the manor’s gate, slamming his fists against it with a madness only shameful desperation could summon. “**Lucien**, you filthy bastard! Get your hands off my sister!”

“You think she’ll be happy with a **wolf** like you? You’re cursed—violent—poisoned from bloodline to soul!”

Inside the manor, the warmth of golden light spilled down the grand **staircase**. From behind the heavy oak doors, Mrs. Beck and Mia stepped into view. The two seasoned servants of the Duskgrave household exchanged a knowing glance.

They had heard every word Kiel shouted. And they were utterly unbothered

Especially after hearing what he’d said about Lucien kissing Riley.

“Oh, **Matriarch** is going to love this,” **Mia** whispered, her eyes twinkling with barely concealed delight.

They didn’t argue.

They **didn’t** open the door.

They simply turned and walked away—to deliver this delightful piece of gossip to the old matriarch herself.

When Matriarch Duskgrave heard the news, she practically glowed.

“Well, finally,” she beamed. “I thought that boy would die celibate at this rate. Took him long enough.”

Back outside, Kael fumed. The door **had** been slammed in his face, **and** the silence inside was deafening.

He continued yelling obscenities at the second floor, completely forgetting the real reason he had come.

Next to him. Theo Hale stood quietly, his **sharp** eyes fixated not on **Kael’s** tantrum but on Riley’s shadow through the window.

Riley sometimes responded to Kael's curse words, but most of the time she ignored them.

She wasn't reacting at all.

Not to the screaming

Not to the accusations.

Not even when her name was barked like a curse through the night.

It struck Theo with **sudden** clarity—a hollow thud in his chest.

She couldn't hear it

Upstairs, in the softly lit bedroom, Lucien held Riley close. His hand rested firmly at the curve of her waist, not possessive, but grounding—like a silent promise. Riley's body remained tense against his chest, her heart beating wildly as she tried to understand what was happening between them,

Her sleep dress clung to her slight frame, **and** Lucien's heat seeped through every fiber, branding her skin **with** his scent- cedar, snow, and faint tobacco. That intoxicating blend muddled her thoughts.

She whispered a thank you, her voice barely audible, tremulous with uncertainty

Lucien **said** nothing

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Instead, he simply gazed down at her. Not with lust—but with something deeper. Something primal.

The shouting outside went unanswered

Lucien knew **now**—Riley wasn't ignoring it

She was deaf to it.

And that realization hit him harder than Kael's insults ever could.

His jaw tightened.

+8 Pearls:

He drew her closer, as if shielding her from all the noise, all the pain, all the past she had never spoken aloud. He could almost feel the bruises of her memory against his chest.

“Lucien..” Riley murmured again, her voice trembling as she pushed at his chest—feeble, uncertain.

But Lucien didn’t let go.

Instead, his lips trailed slowly up the side of her throat, his breath like wildfire skimming her skin. Riley’s pulse fluttered wildly beneath his mouth, heat flooding her cheeks until her entire body felt alight.

She tried to pull away again.

He finally eased his grip—just enough to let her breathe, though his arms remained loosely wrapped around her shoulders.

“You should get some sleep,” he murmured, his voice a soft command.

Riley gave a faint nod and turned toward the window, about to close the curtains when Lucien moved again. In **one** swift motion, he **swept** her off her feet and carried her effortlessly to the **bed**.

She didn’t struggle.

She didn’t even protest.

Her body simply surrendered to the safety of his arms, though her heart still waged war with itself.

Kael’s angry **voice** carried through the walls, a distant echo now.

Lucien ignored it completely.

He placed a **glass** of warm **milk** on the nightstand and handed it to her.

Under his gaze, Riley drank every drop

When she handed it back, Lucien gave her a rare smile—crooked, teasing, almost boyish—and then strode back to the window

Kael was still there.

Lucien met **his gaze**, cool **and** unbothered.

Their eyes locked

Karl's face contorted in rage. "She's not well, Lucien. She can't handle—someone like **you**."

Lucien's lips curved **into a** slow, dangerous **smile**. Then, **without a word**, he yanked the curtain shut, cutting off the outside world

Kael staggered back like the rejection had physically **struck** him.

Inude Lucien turned **back** toward the bed

Riley sat tucked beneath the feather soft **duvet**, her hands clenched **tightly** around the edge. Her cheeks were stained at delicate rose, but her eyes never left Lucien's retreating figure.

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"Lucien she called out **softly as** he neared **the door**."

He paused

+8 Pearls

Only half of his face was lit by the bedside **lamp**, the other lost in shadow. His collar **was** slightly open, **revealing** a sliver of his collarbone beneath his black shirt.

He turned **his** head toward her. "Yes?"

The air between them thickened.

Riley swallowed hard, staring at **him** like **he was** a puzzle too dangerous to solve. "Why... Why are you being so kind to me?"

The question slipped from her lips before she could stop it. But it had been buried inside **her** chest for too **long**.

Lucien's eyes softened, just a fraction.

He crossed the room again and sat on the edge of the bed.

The mattress dipped beneath his weight, and Riley tensed, **breath** stilled.

He studied her in silence for a moment.

Then he said. "Maybe because I see you."

Her **breath** caught.

“And maybe,” he added, his voice a whisper of something far more dangerous, “I don’t like the idea of anyone else trying to break what’s already been shattered.”

Riley **didn’t** reply.

She couldn’t.

Because for the first time, someone hadn’t asked her to explain her scars.

He had simply stepped into the **dark**—and sat beside her.

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Chapter 155

Third Person’s POV

Lucien Duskgrave’s lips parted, his voice low **and** smooth as velvet.

Parce que je veux t’épouser

+8 Pearls

The French syllables slipped through the air like the resonant hum of a cello, brushing **against** the tension of the moment like silk over steel.

Riley Vale’s pupils shrank slightly. The soft glow of the bedroom lights caught the subtle sheen on Lucien’s **lips**, making them gleam with a rose–gold hue. **But** in her ears—**only** silence.

Nyra’s power completely disappeared.

If Riley **had** still been able to catch a few of Kael’s furious curses earlier, **now** she couldn’t **hear** a single sound at all.

A strange silence enveloped her like a thick fog—unnatural, heavy, and absolute.

She blinked, disoriented. The world around her moved—Lucien’s lips, the lightning outside, even **Kael’s** mouth twisting in rage through the glass—but it all unfolded in complete, suffocating stillness.

A faint ringing echoed in her ears, then dulled into a vacuum. Just the **crushing** quiet that reminded her, mercilessly, of what she had **lost**.

Her throat tightened. She had known it was coming—this silence.

The doctors had warned **her** before she left prison: the repeated **blows** to her ears, the fractures left untreated, the ruptured **eardrums that** never fully healed. The guards never cared how hard they struck her—especially when they slapped her for not answering fast enough, for flinching, for daring to look them in the

cyc.

Every slap had chipped away at her world, and now, it **had** finally collapsed.

She swallowed the bitterness that **rose** in her throat.

She hadn’t understood him. Not even a **word**.

But she smiled anyway, Carefully, **gently**, as if pretending the ache in her chest didn’t exist. **As** if she **hadn’t** just been reminded of everything she lacked—especially now that her hearing was gone.

Lucien saw it—just the faintest hitch in her expression, a hesitation so small it might’ve gone unnoticed by anyone else. But not by him. His wolf noticed too, stirring uneasily inside his chest, sniffing out her sadness like a **trail** of blood in the snow.

He watched the trembling of her lashes, the **fragile** shadow they **cast** beneath her **eyes**. A chuckle rumbled softly from **his** throat, too low for her to hear

“Willing” he asked.

Thas—she understood. She could read his lips.

And though her heartbeat faltered in fear, Riley nodded without hesitation. “I do”

Outside the **manor**, thunder cracked against the sky like the **heavens** bearing witness. Lightning lit up the glass behind her. **flashing** across Lucien’s **face** and illuminating the wildness beneath his composed exterior. A flicker of something ancient starred in his irises—his cursed wolf, awakened.

She lived him **just like** that

Lucien felt a sharp twist in his gut Her trust hit him harder than any battle wound ever had. She was too pure Too fragile

Too easy to break.

Chapter 155

++8 Pearls

But her answer—that soft, unknowing “yes“-meant more to him than she could ever comprehend. She **had just** agreed to marry the Alpha of Stormridge Pack, the **man** whispered about in terrified **half**-truths. The one the Vale **family** once tried to force her upon. The one cursed by the Moon Goddess herself to never find his fated mate—unless she fell in love with him

And tonight she'd said yes.

She **was** his.

He turned off the lights with a quiet **flick**. letting the room **fall** into a soft, warm darkness. Riley **curled** under the blankets, her silhouette peaceful—blissfully unaware of how her decision had just altered both their fates.

Downstairs, the **old stone** hallways of the Duskgrave estate echoed under Lucien's steady footsteps. As he entered the drawing room, three pairs of eager eyes snapped up to meet **him**.

Matriarch Duskgrave—his **grandmother**—was practically glowing. “Lucien, where's Riley?”

“She's resting”

“What were you two doing in there?” she asked, half-knowing, half-**prying**

Lucien answered plainly, folding his **tall** frame into a leather armchair, long legs crossed with quiet elegance. “I proposed. She agreed.”

There was a full beat of silence.

“You what?” the Matriarch nearly choked, her eyes **as** wide as full moons.

“How did you even propose?” asked Mrs. Beck, her voice caught between horror and awe.

Lucien arched a brow. “I **asked** if **she'd** marry me. She **said** yes.”

Mia, the old caretaker, blinked in disbelief. “That’s it? No ring? No ceremony? No wolves howling in celebration?”

The women shared a look of stunned disbelief. But their shock slowly melted into soft smiles.

“She’s been through too much,” Mia murmured, her eyes misting. “Maybe simple is exactly what she needed.”

But Matriarch Duskgrave had other thoughts. She scowled fiercely. “You’re **lucky** she’s not the kind to ask for more. You better make it up to her. I want a proper ceremony. Moon–blessed. Pack–witnessed. Understood?”

Lucien gave a **faint** nod, though his wolf snarled in disdain at the idea of fanfare. He **didn’t** care for traditions. He only cared that she **was** his now.

Later that night, with the estate **blanketed** in quiet and only the **distant** echoes of Kael Vale’s fury still ringing from the outer gates, Lucien remained **alone** in the **dim** drawing room. **Thunder grumbled like some ancient beast outside, and his cursed** wolf shifted restlessly beneath his skin.

He thought back to that moment upstairs.

Her delicate lips **shaping** the words “I do”

Her eyes brimming with **trust** she had no reason to **give**

Her body still fragile from years of suffering, trembling in his arms

He had never meant to propose—not yet. But the words had come unbidden, rising from somewhere deep and primal.

Parce que je veux t’épouser

Because I want to marry **you**

Not because the Pack needed

Chapter 15S

But because his wolf had **chosen**.

+8 Pearls

And for the first time in years, the curse didn't feel so absolute. Not **when** Riley Vale **was** upstairs sleeping with his scent on her skin. Not when her agreement rang louder in his memory **than** any pack blessing ever could.

The storm raged on, **but** inside, Lucien's world **had** gone quiet—sealed.

Because tonight, the Moon finally **gave him** something **he** never **thought** he'd have.

Hope

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

[868 words]

Chapter 156

Third Person's POV

Riley hadn't truly fallen asleep,

+8 Pearls

She quietly slipped out from beneath the covers, her bare feet **making** no sound against the wooden floor. Crossing the dimly lit bedroom, she approached the window and drew the curtain open just enough to peer into the storm-lashed courtyard

below.

Outside, Kael Vale was pacing and shouting like a rogue wolf driven mad by grief and rage. His eyes burned gold beneath the rain, his face contorted with fury and desperation as he snarled up at the manor.

By his side. Theo stood in silence, rain dripping from his cloak, jaw set in frustration.

Riley's expression remained utterly cold. Her gaze was like frost in the dead of winter—sharp, silent, merciless.

She knew exactly why Kael had come.

Not for her.

Never for **her**.

He was here for Scarlett—his precious adopted sister, the one who had spent the last five years feeding off Riley’s suffering. The one rotting in the dungeons now.

Looking at the fire blazing in Kael’s eyes, Riley could almost taste his panic. No doubt he feared Scarlett was suffering— **Perhaps** even... being punished.

The corner of her mouth curled upward—not with warmth, but with quiet mockery. It was a smile devoid of softness, like moonlight on a frozen lake: beautiful, distant, and utterly untouchable.

Kael Vale hadn’t see Riley, he still stood drenched at the wrought—iron gates, **his** expression twisted with fury. Every flash of lightning painted his features in stark relief—**wild**, desperate, unhinged. Rain streamed down his face, mingling with sweat and the blood from a shallow cut above his brow, where he’d punched the iron gate in rage.

The front doors of the estate groaned open. Lucien Duskgrave stepped into the storm.

Kain lashed at his broad shoulders, soaking through his black **shirt**, making it cling to his muscular **frame**. Water traced the ridges of **his back**, sliding down like rivers over carved stone. His silver—ringed irises glowed faintly under the lightning— calm, lethal.

Kael’s wolf stirred restlessly beneath his **skin**. His **Alpha aura** surged in a burst of rage. “You bastard,” he **sarled, voice cracking**. “**Give** Riley back to me. **You** don’t deserve to be anywhere near her

He charged like a mad bull, fury fueling **every** stride. His fist flew toward Lucien’s face

Lucien didn’t **flinch**. His arm shot up, blocking the blow with effortless precision. **Rainwater** rolled off his forearm, **glinting** over the taut lines of muscle and **veins**.

From the second—story window, Riley watched the clash, even though she couldn’t bear what they were saying, her knuckles white **as** she clutched the edge of the **curtains**. Her heart pounded **as** Kael lunged again—only for Lucien to twist his body with predatory grace, **landing** a **punishing** side kick that sent Kael sprawling across the **muddy gravel**.

“**You** don’t deserve to call yourself her brother,” **Lucien said** coldly.

Kael staggered to his feet, lips curled in a **snarl**. “And you do?” he spat. “You’re no better. You know her body can’t handle intimacy—she’s **weak**, she’s **fragile**—and yet **you** you still **touched** her.”

Lucien's gaze turned to ice, his presence crackling with dangerous stillness. Rain slid over the **hard** angles of his **face**, making his already chiseled features sharper. He looked like a storm incarnate—beautiful, merciless.

"She's dead. Karl Her leg **is** shattered Her kidney's gone" His voice was quiet, but it hit like thunder "And you dare talk to me about cruelty!"

Chapter 156

+8 Pearls

Karl froze

Lucien turned without **another** word, disappearing into the manor, leaving Kael rooted in place like he'd been struck by a bolt of lightning.

Kael's lips parted, trembling. "Deaf.." he repeated hoarsely. "What did you **say**?"

But Lucien was already gone.

Kael's knees gave out beneath him, his body **collapsing** into the mud. His hands trembled. "No... no, that's not possible. She's

Kael's knees gave

not...

But the **signs** had been there—the way she never flinched at his shouts, the **way** she always watched him, **the** absence of response even when he screamed her **name**.

The truth hit **him** like a tidal wave, dragging his pride and denial into the abyss. Rain pelted **his** face, but it couldn't hide the tears that **now** streamed **from his** eyes.

He clawed his way upright, shoving off the helping hand of Theo. His eyes locked on the darkened window above—on the silhouette barely visible through the curtains.

"Riley," he rasped: "I'm sorry. I didn't know—I didn't see—I didn't.. His voice cracked, broken beyond recognition.

"I'm **so** sorry!"

Lightning streaked overhead again as Kael dropped to his knees with a wet, sickening thud in the mud. The storm **didn't** relent—it screamed with him, as if nature itself had turned its fury on his guilt.

Wind lashed his face. Rain mixed with blood **as** he lowered his head and slammed his forehead to the earth.

Again.

And again.

Thick red welts rose beneath his hairline. His vision blurred, but he didn't stop.

"She can't hear you," Theo said quietly, shielding his eyes against the rain.

"She can see me!" Kael howled, voice fraying at the edges. "She can see what I'm doing, and that's all I have left!"

Thunder swallowed the sound of his anguish.

On the second floor, Riley stood silently, her expression unreadable as she gazed down at the man who had **once** sworn to protect her. There was no triumph in her eyes. No pity. Just an icy stillness...and a **wound** that went far deeper **than** sound. could reach.

Send Gifts

294

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

[641 words]

Chapter 157

Riley's POV

+8 Pearls

I stood at the window, fingers curling around the edge of the heavy **curtain**, peering through the narrow gap. Rain streaked down the **glass** in thick sheets, blurring the **world** beyond, but even through the downpour, I could see Kael

He was kneeling in the mud, soaked to the bone, his posture wild and desperate. His mouth moved in broken, frantic patterns. I couldn't hear a word—my world had gone **quiet** long ago—but I didn't need to. His face **said** everything.

Remorse. Rage, Guilt

But I'd seen this show before.

Kael wasn't new to apologies. **Every** time he knelt, every time he cried, it was always the same script. One minute, he'd weep for **what** he did to me. The next, he'd raise his voice and defend the very people who broke me—especially her.

And every time, I was expected to forgive.

Not anymore.

My expression remained **still**, carved from the frost that clung to my bones. Whatever flicker of empathy I once felt for Kael had long since turned to ash.

He wasn't here for me.

He was here for her. For Scarlett. His precious little sister, rotting in a prison she earned.

He hadn't come for justice.

He'd come because his conscience bit back for the first time.

A cold smile tugged at my lips. The kind that held no humor, only quiet, worn-out contempt.

I turned away from the **window**. There was only one person in this house who mattered to me now.

Lucien

It was because of me that he got into a fight with Kael in **the first** place. And Lucien had a curse—one older **than** most wolves could remember, one **that** forbade him from claiming his true nature... unless she fell hopelessly in love with him first.

And I—goddess help me—I **was** dangerously close.

I hurried **toward** the bedroom door, my weakened leg dragging **slightly** behind me, but I didn't stop. My **heart** pounded harder with each step as I raced down the stairs.

Then the **door** creaked **open**

Lucien stepped into the **manor**, framed by the storm behind him.

He looked like something out of a **fever** dream. His black shirt **clung** to his body, soaked through, revealing **every** sculpted inch of his chest **and** abdomen beneath Rain

dripped from **his hair**, tracing rivulets down his jaw and collarbone. Even drenched, he moved like a king—silent, **elegant**, and deadly.

“Lucien I gasped, my voice catching.

I rushed toward him, but I misstepped—my bad leg gave way

4 sudden drop Weightlessness I floated as the world tipped sideways.

But before I hit the ground, arms caught me

ms mes

Strong Steady Familiar

Chapter 157

+8 Pearls

Lucien

His scent wrapped around me—pine and storm and something darker, more primal. He cradled me effortlessly, my body pressed against his chest, his heartbeat loud and thunderous under my palm.

For a moment, there was only us. The storm faded. The house vanished. All I could feel was the heat of **his** skin, the tension in his muscles, and the emotion swimming in his eyes as he looked down at me.

“Are you hurt?” he asked, voice raw with **concern**.

I shook my head, **still** breathless.

He eased me down, but didn’t let me go. His hand lingered on my lower back, the other trailing down to my wrist, where my **pulse** fluttered like wings.

And then, slowly, deliberately, he pulled off the silver ring from his finger.

The one he’d worn since the day I met him.

My breath hitched as he slid it **onto** mine.

The cold metal kissed my skin.

Right over my middle finger.

My lips parted, but no words **came** out

Tears pricked the corners of my eyes—not because I was sad, but because something inside me cracked open, something I thought had died long **ago**.

Outside, **Kael** was still shouting into the storm, his face contorted in agony as he knelt in the mud, begging forgiveness that would never come.

But I couldn't hear him.

Because in this moment, my world was **quiet**.

And Lucien's heartbeat was the only sound I needed.

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

[722 words]

Chapter 158

Lucien's POV

The downpour outside was relentless, but even that couldn't mask the scent of her night-blooming jasmine

+8 Pearls

soft, delicate, and slightly sweet, like

nothing more than a storm, I could hear Kael shouting in the distance, his voice hoarse and desperate, but it was

to me now.

My focus was entirely on her.

Riley

I watched from the shadows of the corridor as she sprinted down the stairs, her limp barely slowing her down, that **stubborn** determination etched into every fragile step she took. She was running toward me. Me- the man she should have feared The cursed Alpha she didn't fully understand. And yet, she came

She **always** came.

She blinked, confused, watching as I pulled the ring from my finger- the silver one I had worn for years, engraved with the sigil of the Duskgrave **line**. It was more than a ring. It was a legacy. A curse. A vow.

And I **slid** it onto her finger.

Her breath hitched. She stared down at the simple **band**, watching it slide past her knuckle and settle perfectly against her

skin.

A perfect fit.

Just like her.

Her mouth parted, but no words came.

“Wearing this means you’re mine,” I said softly, voice low, rough with restrained emotion. “And that I’ll protect **you**. Always.”

She looked up at me, **trembling**.

I could see the war in her **eyes** disbelief, wonder, fear, **and** something that looked dangerously close to hope. She wanted to. believe me. She wanted to trust me. But she’d been broken too many times to fall so easily.

Still, she didn’t take the ring off.

Didn’t say no.

That was enough.

For now.

I picked her up gently and carried her upstairs, ignoring the dull **ache** in my muscles, the way the rain had soaked me to the bone She didn’t protest. Her head rested against my shoulder, her fingers still curled around mine.

Back in her room, I laid her down on the **bed**, adjusting the pillow behind her, smoothing her hair from her forehead.

She looked so small in that moment, **but** not weak. Never **weak**

She was quiet as I pulled the **blanket** over her, but I saw how her fingers lingered on the ring – how her **thumb** kept **brushing** over the cool metal like it grounded her.

I didn't say anything else I didn't need to

I turned off the light and left the room, letting the darkness wrap **around** her **like** a second promise

Down the hall. I returned to my own chambers

Steam still clung to the frosted glass of the shower, the air thick with cedar and heat. I toweled off my hair slowly, every

Chapter 158

motion precise Calm

But inside?

Inside, I was a storm.

+8 Pearls

The wolf beneath my **skin** paced restlessly, claws skimming bone, fangs bared in satisfaction. She'd accepted the ring. She

not by the mate bond, **not** yet. But by **me**. By choice.

was marked now

–

And that meant more.

The mate bond was instinct.

This was will.

I dropped the towel and walked to the window, pulling open the heavy curtains. Rain **lashed against** the glass, and down

below. I saw **him**.

Kael

Soaked. Broken. On his knees

His fists **slammed** into the mud as he screamed up at **Riley's** window, voice cracking with remorse. He looked like a beast trying to rip its own heart out dramatic, pathetic, and utterly predictable.

I watched him with detached interest, lighting a cigarette and leaning against the window frame. Smoke curled around my face as I exhaled slowly, watching the scene unfold like a play I'd seen too many times.

Guilt. Repentance. Self-pity.

A performance, all of it.

My lips twisted into a faint smirk.

if he thought Riley was the same naïve girl he used to manipulate, he was in for a brutal awakening.

She belonged to me now.

And I would destroy anyone who tried to take her from me whether they wore the mask of a repentant brother, a jealous ex, or even a corrupted **Alpha**.

I flicked ash into the tray and murmured to myself, "Kael Vale is far too idle. I **should** find him something to do."

I reached for my phone.

Tapped Duke's number.

No answer

Strange.

I frowned, hit redial Sull nothing. The third call went unanswered too

I glanced at the time—10:03 pm.

Duke wouldn't be asleep. Not now. Not with how I trained him

Interesting.

Fleeced back into the **chair** again, gaze slipping **back** to the **storm** outside.

Karl was still kneeling Sull bleeding Still calling out a **name** she **couldn't** even hear

And Hairy was upstairs sleeping in my bed.

[937 words]

Chapter 159

Third Person's POV

+8.Pearls

As for why Lucien couldn't reach his Beta, Duke—at this very moment, the male was tearing through the rain-slicked streets of Mooncrest like **a** shadow on wheels.

The sleek black Maybach cut through the storm like a predator through underbrush, tires hissing against the drenched pavement. It finally **came** to a stop at the gates of Ashmoor University.

Inside the car, the scent of aged sandalwood clashed with the lingering jasmine in the air—delicate traces of the young she-wolf sitting in the passenger seat.

Duke's sharp gaze slid toward her from the corner of his eye.

Tears clung to her lashes like crystal shards, and her white T-shirt, damp with spilled liquor, clung to her frail frame. Her collarbones jutted out beneath her pale **skin**, and the outline of her shoulder blades looked as fragile as bird **wings**.

She glanced at him and whispered, "Thank you... for bringing me back."

Her voice was soft, Honest. It carried none of the practiced seduction he was used to hearing from the females of the city.

Duke raised a brow, amused. "You really are a student," he muttered, lips quirking with dry humor.

The girl—Carmen—pressed her lips together and fidgeted with her fingers, looking painfully out of place, like a rogue pup in **a** court full of nobles.

He watched her silently for another beat before adding, "If you are **a** student, you really shouldn't be hanging around places like Silverfang Den. If I hadn't been there tonight, you might not have made it out unharmed."

She dipped her head in shame **and gave** a soft, barely audible, "Mm."

She hadn't meant to end up there.

The pay at the bar was **just** too good **to** pass up. Her mother had been cast out of the Ebonclaw Pack, and Carmen had **taken** it upon herself to help ease the burden. Even if it meant risking everything.

She gathered her courage, nodded, and whispered, “I—I should go.

Her **hand** reached for the door.

“**Wait**,” Duke said abruptly.

Carmen froze, startled, glancing back at him.

He reached behind his seat and pulled out a sleek, silver-trimmed umbrella. In the soft glow of the interior lights, it gleamed -sleek, branded, expensive.

He handed it to her.

Carmen blinked, stunned by the gesture. “Thank **you...**”

Just **as** she was about to step out, **she paused** and turned back **to** ask, “Sir, how should I return **the** umbrella?”

“No need,” Duke replied **easily**, already shifting his attention to the console.

But Carmen looked down at the **small** emblem on the handle—an unmistakable Stormridge sigil. **She** shook her head firmly

This undrella, it’s too valuable. I have to return it”

A brief, amused **glint passed** through Duke’s eyes. “Alright, then I’ll come collect it myself—tomorrow morning”

Carmen, not picking up on his teasing tone, nodded earnestly. “Okay. I’ll wait for you outside the gate.”

She opened the door and stepped out, pausing once more to glance **back**. “Sir be safe on your way home.”

Chapter 159

+8 Peads

Then she turned and disappeared into the misty sillionette of the campus, the umbrella suapping open above her like a

shield

Duke watched her retreating figure until it **vanished** into the shadows of the university. Only then did he shift gears and **case** the Maybach back into motion.

He hadn't expected the night to take such a turn.

There was something oddly refreshing about Carmen—the stubborn innocence, the blunt gratitude, the complete lack of guile. A rare find in a city full of ambition and lies. He wasn't entirely sure why, but she made the rain feel a little less heavy.

His fingers drummed against the wheel **as** the car cruised smoothly through the storm. Raindrops drummed against the windshield in a steady rhythm, half-lulling, half-maddening

Reaching for his phone with one hand, he flicked the screen on—only to see three missed calls from Lucien **Duskgrave**.

Duke winced. “Sh“t”

He hit the call-back button and put it on speaker, bracing himself

Back at Duskgrave Manor, Lucien answered on the first ring-

“Well,” came the Alpha’s dark drawl, “your nightlife seems... entertaining”

Duke **gave a** half-grin. “You always did say **nothing** escapes you, **Alpha**,”

Lucien didn't laugh.

He never did when it was business.

“We’re done entertaining.” Lucien said coolly “Kael Vale’s gone far too comfortable. Time to bankrupt the Ebonclaw **Pack’s** precious company. Give him something else to cry about.”

Duke blinked. “You want to crash Vale Industries?”

Lucien’s tone was as casual as it was lethal. “By sunrise.”

There was a long pause.

Duke pulled the phone away from his ear, stared at it like it **had** just grown fangs, then sighed and muttered, “You’ve got to be kidding

He knew **his Alpha**. When Lucien made a decision, it **wasn’t** up for debate.

Though Vale Industries was a mid-tier operation, dismantling a pack-run corporation in **a single night** would require a perfect storm—legal threads, supply chain sabotage, digital warfare... the whole **arsenal**

And he was Just

our exhausted Beta who'd spent the night peeling drunk she—**wolves** off a girl who barely weighed ninety **pounds** soaking wet.

Sull, he'd signed up for this life.

“Understood,” Duke said at last. “I’ll start with the contracts tied to their Northern shipping routes. Their exports to Blackmaw territory are already unstable”

Lucien gave a quiet grunt of approval and hung up

Duke tossed the phone into the passenger seat and let out a **long**, soul-weary groan.

“One of these days,” he muttered to no one. “you’re going to be the death of me”

Then he slammed the gas

The Mayat surged forward like a predator on the hunt, **rain** shearing off its sides **as** it hurtled through the city The

blurred past, and

es were already falling into plai

by omm. lining up

+8 Pearls

G

249 PMP P.

Chapter 159

collapse.

He didn't feel pity for Kael Vale.

Not anymore.

All that mattered now was obedience.

And speed.

Because come sunrise, there'd be nothing left of the Ebonclaw Pack's empire but ashes and regret.

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

[895 words]

Chapter 160

Karl's POV

The rain didn't stop

It **came** down like a curse from the Moon Goddess herself—cold, relentless, and unforgiving

+ Pearls

I'd been kneeling outside the Duskgrave estate for what felt like a lifetime. In truth, it had only been two hours, but every minute in that storm felt like a blade slicing through my spine.

My knees were numb. My fingers too still to curl. My wolf was silent.

And my heart? **Shattered,**

I wasn't here to make a scene. I wasn't here to beg for pity. I was here because I'd wronged her—Riley. My little sister. My

blood

My adopted sister offended my biological sister, **and** I want to ask for her forgiveness, Riley has always been easy to coax. As long as I am a little gentler to her, she will do exactly **what** I say. But I don't know why this time, she seems really heartbroken.

I deserved the pain.

It was the only thing that made sense anymore.

The downpour blurred everything—my vision, my thoughts, my pride.

I don't remember falling.

One second I was kneeling... the next, the world tilted sideways. Cold water rushed up to meet me, soaking into my clothes and lungs. Then, **black**

When I came to, it wasn't the **rain** I felt—it was heat. Clean, dry, sullocating heat.

Hospital lights.

I blinked against the brightness, my throat burning, my body aching in places I didn't know could ache. My **limbs** felt like they were made of lead. The IV line tugged slightly as I shifted, and a dull beep rang from some monitor nearby.

Then, my phone rang

A **shrill** buzz that cut **through** my skull like claws on stone.

I fumbled for it, pressed it to my ear, my voice a **rasp**. "Hello...?"

"**Alpha** Karl! Finally! Where the hell have you been?! I've been calling all night!" It was Luca—my assistant, his voice cracking under pressure. "You need to get to the company. Now. It's it's over. The company—Vale Industries—it's gone. We're bankrupt

I bolted upright. Pain ricocheted through my skull, but I didn't care. "What did you just say?!"

"I—I sand we're finished! The board's in chaos, the banks froze our assets, the media's already outside. We're under investigation for tax fraud And **Alpha**. His voice dropped, trembling. "The council **has** been alerted"

I stared blankly at the white walls around me "Impossible. We were fine **yesterday**. We just **signed** off on the new trade route with the Blackmaw border fleet. There's no way we could've collapsed overnight."

But deep down, I knew that wasn't true.

The truth?

We'd been bleeding for months

Debt Corruption False reports. The **façade** I helped build to keep the pack's reputation intact was crumbling because of

Chapter 160

Π

+B Pearls

1. me. Because I was too arrogant to admit that Riley **had** seen it all first. That her **warnings** weren't paranoia... they were prophecy.

Lucien.

My teeth ground together.

Stormridge's infamous Alpha. Riley's **so-called** savior.

He'd done this.

He must've.

No one else had the power—or the motive—to tear down Ebonclaw's **pride in a single** night.

I ripped the IV from my arm, blood dripping down my wrist. The nurse outside shouted something, **but** I was already pulling on my coat. Hospital **gown** still clinging to me like shame, I didn't care.

I had to see it for myself..

The ride to the company was a blur. **The** streets still slick with rain, **the** sky a murky gray like it hadn't yet decided whether to **give** me a second chance or bury me for good.

When I arrived at the Vale Industries tower, it wasn't the chaos that got **me**—it was the silence.

No!

lights on. No staff rushing through the doors. **Just** cold wind and wet concrete.

And the cops

Three enforcers from **the** Lunar **Tribunal** stood at the front gate.

One of them stepped forward. "**Alpha** Kael Vale!"

I squared my shoulders. "What do you want?"

"Vale Industries **is** under investigation for severe tax violations and regulatory fraud," the **wolf** said. "You are listed as the registered Alpha-owner **and** legal representative. You'll need to come with us."

His words didn't land right.

Registered Alpha-owner?

Legal representative?

That **wasn't** possible.

I **was** never made the **formal** head of the company. My father was the founder. The true Alpha of Ebonclaw's **financial** arm.

I was just the heir. The name on the documents was never supposed to be mine.

"What the hell do you mean I'm the legal **representative**?"
I **snapped**. **"That's** impossible.

But even **as** I said it, pieces were falling into **place**.

The **day** Father left for **the** Western Territories.

The emergency documents he pushed in front of me.

"Just sign it, Kael We need a name to secure the deal before the council interferes

I signed it without reading it

I thought it was temporary

I thought I was just holding rein until he **came** back

Chapter 160

My **own** damn name.

And Goddess... **what** if this was always the **plan**?

What if my father never **intended** to come **back**?

What if I'd been made a **scapegoat** from the beginning?

The enforcers moved in.

I didn't resist.

There was nothing left to fight for.

Only one face haunted me now—**Riley's**.

My little sister.

The one I locked away. The one I called a traitor. The one I beat **and** betrayed to protect a lie.

+8 Pearls

She **once** warned me to be cautious after learning about it—being the legal representative of a company is no easy task. But I brushed it off as her showing **off** some petty tricks in front of me. I didn't listen to her. In fact, I coldly warned her to mind her **own** business.

I didn't listen.

Now the world was burning, and I was the fool kneeling in its ashes.

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

[707 words]

Chapter 161

Third Person's **POV**

At the Duskgrave **Estate**

J

+8 Pearls

Moonlight filtered faintly through the heavy storm clouds still hanging above the Stormridge mountains, but inside the Duskgrave estate, warmth pulsed from the hearth, casting flickering shadows across the marble floors.

Duke stumbled through the front doors of the manor, soaked in exhaustion, dark circles beneath his eyes heavy like bruises. Without **a** shred of decorum, he collapsed onto the velvet-lined sofa **with a** theatrical sigh.

"Aaah—finally. Heaven."

Mrs. Beck, who had been dusting the shelves with practiced efficiency, glanced over and smiled indulgently. She was used to his antics by now. “Another all-nighter?”

Duke groaned, **barely** managing to keep his eyes open. “All-nighter? Please. That wasn’t work, **that** was a soul-extraction ritual. If Alpha Lucien had ruled in ancient times, I swear he would’ve been a tyrant. He’s draining me dry before I even hit thirty

A low, magnetic voice echoed **from** the staircase above.

“Duke, it sounds like **you** have quite a few complaints about your Alpha.”

The sound alone made Duke jolt upright as if struck by lightning. He snapped into a straight posture, grinning like a loyal mutt, eyes twinkling with faux sincerity.

“Not at all! **You’re** the sun in my sky, Alpha. Every day working under you warms my cold, withering heart.”

He clutched his chest dramatically. Mrs. Beck and **Mia**, standing by the dining **room** arch, both chuckled softly at his antics. The whole estate seemed lighter for a moment, laughter chasing away the remnants of the storm outside.

Lucien descended the **stairs, sharp in a black** cashmere sweater and slacks, his aura cool and commanding. He took the armchair opposite Duke, resting his elbows on his knees as he asked calmly. “How did it **go?**”

Duke straightened, pride flickering in **his** tired eyes. “The Ebonclaw Pack’s empire? Crumbled. Kael Vale didn’t even **have** time to beg. But that’s not all. I made a rather... interesting discovery.”

Lucien appeared disinterested, reaching for the folded **financial** bulletin atop the coffee table. He leaned back lazily, eyes skimming the headlines **as** he murmured, “I’m listening.”

Duke, eager to impress, cleared his throat. “Turns out, **Kael’s** father, Alpha Alaric Vale, sold off all his stock in the Vale Holdings **months ago. Liquidated** it. **And** guess where the money went?”

Lucien’s eyes remained on the page. “Surprise **me.**”

To a single account under a name you’ll know—Dean Elira Blackthorn.”

Now that got his attention.

Lucien set the paper down with a soft rustle. His expression was unreadable, but **his** gaze sharpened like a dagger **drawn** from its sheath

Duke continued. “The Elonclaw Pack’s accounts were already riddled **with** holes **Tax** evasion, embezzlement, **collapsed** trust funds. Even if we hadn’t

ownership of the shed them, they would’ve imploded within weeks. But the kicker! A few months ago, the legal

group was quietly transferred”

Lucien’s brow arched faintly “To Karl?”

“Exactly All under Alaric’s instructions. He set **his** own son up as the scapegoat”

Lucien leaned back into the chair, a lazy smirk curling at the edge of his lips **Alaric** Vale what an impressive coward.”

141PMP P.

Chapter 161

+8 Pearls

Duke shrugged, still baffled. “Honestly, I **don’t** get the guy. He built a company from the ground up, only to sell it for scraps. and leave **his** son to take the fall. For a woman, no less.”

Lucien tapped the armrest with two fingers, his thoughts clearly elsewhere. “**And** Kael?”

“Arrested, most likely. The Tribunal **was already** waiting outside the company tower when he showed up. As the legal representative, he’ll be prosecuted for tax fraud. Might serve real time, too.”

Lucien’s expression didn’t change, but there **was** an unmistakable chill in his **eyes**. “Shame. I was hoping he’d last a little longer

Duke stretched with a yawn, rubbing his eyes. “Honestly, I don’t **think** he had another round in him. Looked like he’d already been flattened by the world.”

Just then, a commotion stirred at the front entrance.

“I need to speak with Riley. Now. It’s urgent,” **came** a familiar voice—low, anxious, and insistent.

Duke, half-asleep, frowned. “Who the hell is that?”

Mia glanced toward the door. “It’s healer Theo Hale.”

“Who?” Duke asked, brows knotting in confusion as he turned to Lucien for clarity.

Lucien didn’t even need to look. He’d recognized the voice the moment it pierced the manor’s calm.

His tone was cool and indifferent as always, but firm. “Let him in.”

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294

+8 Pearls

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

[732 words]

Chapter 162

Third Person’s POV

The moment Lucien’s voice fell, the front doors of the manor burst open with a loud bang. Theo Hale strode in, rainwater still clinging to the hem of his coat, a thick file clutched tightly in his hand

His eyes swept urgently **across** the grand entry hall, scanning for Riley like a wolf who’d caught her scent.

“Where’s Riley?” he demanded, his voice **sharp** with adrenaline.

Mia, who had just been arranging a **vase** on the **entry** table, blinked at him in surprise. “Doctor Theo, the young miss is still resting.”

“She needs to wake up—now,” Theo said, stepping forward, his tone urgent. “It’s important. I need to speak with her.”

Mia hesitated, her eyes flickering toward Lucien **as** if seeking guidance. Though she was not **a** servant of the house, even she knew when a command could not override the Alpha’s will.

Lucien’s **gaze** locked onto Theo with the chilling stillness of a predator. His voice was quiet, but there was **no** mistaking the authority that laced every syllable. “If **this** is about the Ebonclaw Pack’s fall, you can **leave**. I’ll handle it myself.”

Theo stiffened. That tone—so superior, so unyielding—always set his teeth on edge.

He'd grown **up** surrounded by powerful people, but none exuded this particular kind of dangerous calm. Wealth, strength, command—Lucien Duskgrave had it all. And Theo hated how insignificant the man made everyone else seem in comparison.

Still, Theo lifted **his** chin in defiance. “You were the one who took down the Ebonclaw Pack, weren't **you?**”

Then, after a beat, he added pointedly, “Aren't you **afraid** Riley will hate you for it?”

The entire room stilled.

Lucien, Duke, Mia, even Mrs. Beck all turned toward Theo with unreadable expressions. **Their** silence was heavier **than** the rain still dripping from his coat.

A flicker of doubt crossed Theo's mind. **Maybe** Riley didn't hate Lucien for **what** he did. Maybe she understood.

He swallowed hard and forced his voice to steady. “I'm not here to argue. I'm here because I found something. About her missing kidney”

The room froze.

Lucien's eyes, cold **as** steel, sharpened into lethal focus. A storm began to churn behind them—a threat far greater **than** the

one **outside**.

Even Duke, who'd been halfway to falling asleep **upright**, jolted fully **awake**, spine straight **as** a lance

Mrs Beck **gasped**, while **Mia** covered her mouth with both **hands**.

From the stairwell above, Matriarch Duskgrave—who had just begun her descent for breakfast—stopped **mid**—step. Her hand trembled slightly on her cane

Lucien's **voice** cut **through** the **tension** like a blade. “Mia Wake her”

But before she could move, a quiet sound from the **stairs** interrupted them.

Kiley stood on the landing her expression pale, her eyes wide and **glassy**.

Her bearing hadn't returned yet, but she saw Theo's **mouth** and knew everything.

kalory”

The words “missing **kidney**” **echoed** like a curse through her mind. That wound—deep and brutal—was one she had buried. but never healed from A part of her had always wondered what had happened, who had done it, and why

Chapter 162

Now, finally, she might have an answer.

+8 Pearls

She descended slowly, her steps heavy with disbelief, her entire body drawn tight like **a bowstring**. When she reached the bottom, she didn’t speak. She simply walked straight up to Theo and grabbed his arms with both hands.

Her nails dug into his flesh.

“Tell me,” she whispered, her voice cracking with urgency. “Tell me the truth, Theo. Is it real? Do you know where it went? Who took it? Who has it?”

Her words came out in a desperate rush, eyes burning with the fire of a year’s worth of torment **and** unanswered questions.

Theo winced at the pressure of her grip, but he didn’t pull away “Riley, **calm** down. I’ll tell you everything, I swear. But you have to take a breath-

“Don’t tell me to calm down!” she snapped, though her **voice** trembled more from pain than anger.

Yet, **when** her eyes locked with his—when she saw the concern there—she forced herself to **inhale**. To hold herself together. She couldn’t break down. Not now.

Not when the truth was finally within reach.

Theo looked down at her, his chest tight. Goddess, what had they done to this girl? Even standing there, broken and trembling, she had the strength of a warrior. But **that** didn’t make the injustice any less monstrous.

And then, Lucien spoke.

His voice was softer now. But it held something else, too—something gentler. Protective.

“Come here, bunny.”

It **was** the first time he’d ever used a pet name for her.

The entire room turned toward **him**.

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

[765 words]

Chapter 163

Lucien's POV

I forgot she couldn't hear me

+8 Pearls

Riley had her back to me, completely unaware of what I'd said. The weight of her silence struck me like a sharp snap of cold wind—I'd spoken, and she hadn't even flinched. That's when it hit me she didn't hear me. Of course she didn't.

Without a word, I walked over and took her hand.

turned at the contact, her eyes flickering up to mine just as I mouthed, "Don't panic. Sit down—we'll take this slow"

She nodded, her fingers trembling slightly in mine, and followed me to the couch.

The moment we sat down, her attention snapped back to Theo Hale like a wolf tracking prey. Her gaze never left him—never even blinked, like she was terrified that if she did, she'd miss some vital truth that might finally explain everything.

Theo settled across from us and cleared his **throat**. He tried to keep his voice steady, but I could hear the strain buried beneath it

"Riley I know you want answers. I wish I had more to give. I don't know who took your kidney. I don't know who **has** it now. But I do know this—it didn't happen randomly. Someone targeted you long before you ever went to prison"

He laid the file folder on the table. One by one, he began pulling out sheets, placing them neatly between us.

"These records—they're from a compatibility screening. A renal match evaluation, done right years ago. I need you to **look**. Was this your test? And if it was... who brought you in for it?"

Riley reached out with shaking hands, as if the papers might explode on contact. Her eyes devoured the information.

Light years ago.

I saw the moment she realized what that date meant. The way her pupils dilated. The way her spine stiffened.

“Eight years ago, she returned to the Ebonclaw Pack—to the family that had abandoned her. That was when her **so**-called parents **took** her to the Mooncrest Central Hospital. Told her it was just a physical Routine check-up, they’d said. **A** precaution. They were concerned for her

She believed them

She thought—gods, she thought they cared.

But it was

freeze, then begin to tremble—first slightly, then uncontrollably. Her entire body shivered **as the realization**

They didn’t bring her back out of love.

They brought her back to harvest her

She was just a donor to them. A walking organ **bank**

at her disposal: down her checks. And in that moment, I swore I **could** feel her

heartbeat like it was my own

“Eight years ago the day after I came back they took me to Mooncrest Central I thought it was just a full-body checkup... It wasn’t Was it Her voice cracked

“They **planned** that from **the** start.

149 PM P P.

Chapter 163

+5 Pearls

She looked up at Theo again. They didn’t love me. They never did. But this? This is what I was worth to **them**?”

Her voice faltered, drowned in disbelief and betrayal. Her lips quivered, her fists clenched in her lap. She wasn't crying out of **sadness**—no. This was grief sharpened into rage. Into hate.

And gods, it took everything in me not to burn the **Ebonclaw** Pack to the ground right then.

Everyone was quiet—Duke, Mia, even Matriarch Duskgrave who'd joined us in silence. No one knew **what** to say. They were all staring at Riley like she might shatter.

1. on the other hand, felt the pressure building in my chest like **a** storm. My blood ran ice—cold. My breathing slowed to a lethal rhythm.

They hurt **her**.

They carved her apart.

And they did it with smiling faces **and** parental concern.

I've seen monsters in my time—but Abaric **Vale** and his families redefined the **word**,

Still... I couldn't lose control. Not yet.

I forced myself to stay focused.

"One year ago." I said, my voice cutting through the room like a blade, "who in the Ebonclaw Pack was hospitalized?"

All eyes turned to Theo.

He blinked, ran a quick mental scan. "No **one**. Not that I know of..." **Then** he paused. "Wait. Scarlett. She was overseas a year ago. Only returned recently."

My jaw clenched.

Coincidence? No. I didn't believe in those. Not in this game.

"We'll know soon enough," I said coldly. "Get the travel records."

Duke shot up from the couch, **almost** knocking it backward. His fingers grazed the worn edge of the medical documents. "I'll find out everything"

I glanced at him.

"No," I said. "You need rest. This goes to Caelum."

Duke hesitated mid–**step**, surprise flickering **across his** face.

But I didn't look away. Didn't blink.

I **sat** forward, elbows on my knees, my voice **low and unwavering**.

This wasn't just another mission now.

This was war.

And I would raze every stone of the Ebonclaw Pack before I let them touch Riley again.

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294

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

[763 words]

Chapter 164

Third Person's POV

+8 Pearls

Caelum Knox was known throughout the rogue territories as “the Reaper.” He once single–handedly infiltrated a cartel compound deep in the jungles beyond Blackthorn Valley and eliminated every target without backup. A former warhound. **from** the Eastern Front, his legend was still whispered in rogue circles **with** fear.

After retiring from active service, Lucien Duskgrave had personally recruited him–not as a driver, though that was the title outsiders knew–**but** as the Shadow Enforcer of the Stormridge Pack. Whenever Lucien needed something done quietly, quickly, and without loose **ends**, Caelum was the one who moved.

Despite his quiet demeanor, those who understood Lucien's true power knew Caelum was his sharpened fang, the one that struck in the dark.

Duke, Lucien's second assistant, knew **his** Alpha well. The moment Lucien assigned the task to Caelum, Duke realized **this** time. Lucien was **truly** enraged.

If Caelum moved, secrets long buried—even from eight generations back—would be unearthed. The Ebonclaw **Pack's** filth, land everything the Vale family had done to Riley, would soon be laid bare.

Duke slowly sat back down, and a heavy silence cloaked the entire room like thick fog. It wasn't just the **calm** before a storm it was the feeling of breath being held, of judgment approaching

Riley sat rigid on the couch, her mind a storm of **chaos**. Her gaze swept across the people around her—each looking at her with eyes full of **sorrow, rage**, and pity.

Her heart twisted painfully in her chest, clenched by an invisible hand that wouldn't let go. The **grief**, the betrayal, the shame -it surged through her like crashing waves, each one higher than the last.

She was suffocating.

She wanted to cry, to scream, but she clenched her jaw. She wouldn't fall apart. Not here. Not now. She didn't want to make anyone worry, Didn't want them to see just how broken she truly was.

"I... I'll head upstairs," she whispered, her voice nearly inaudible.

She stood, but the world tilted. The air around her swirled, her vision blurred, and her knees buckled slightly.

Lucien, Duke, and Theo moved in unison, all three men rising instinctively to steady her.

Lady Duskgrave, Mrs. Beck, and Mia also took a step forward, concern etched into their faces.

But Riley forced herself to stay upright. Her pride, battered as it **was**, kept her **standing**.

She gave them a **strained** smile, her lips trembling. "I'm fine. Just stood too fast, that's all."

Her voice was hollow, the smile paper-thin. But she waved them **off** and turned toward the stairs.

"Miss Riley, Mia called gently, "breakfast **is** ready just a few bites, please?"

Riley caught the movement of Mia's lips and shook her head. "No appetite. You all go ahead."

Her steps were **slow and** unstable, each one as though she were walking through fog.

Mia's heart twisted as she watched her limp away, the scars of her past still etched into her every movement. The thought that someone—her own family—had not only neglected her but **stolen** a piece of her body...

It was unforgivable

Tears welled in Mia's eyes **as** she turned away, **unable** to bear it.

But Riley didn't return

349 PM P

Chapter 164

+8 Pearls

She walked into the embroidery room—a **small**, sunlit space Lucien had chosen for her himself. "If you're tired, he'd once said, "stand here, look at the **garden**, breathe in the air. Let it soothe you. This room suits you."

And it had Before.

Now, the sunlight felt **cold**. The scent of the blooming roses—fiery red, soft pink, snowy white—was nothing but noise. Even **the** fresh air couldn't pierce the dark cloud **that** swallowed her.

She moved to the embroidery frame and stared at the unfinished Peony of Eternal Bloom she'd begun days ago. It was vibrant, detailed, **and** filled with hope when she started it.

Now it looked gray.

Her fingers trembled as she reached for the needle. She forced herself to focus on the fine lines, the **colored thread**, the rhythm.

But on the third stitch, **a** single tear slipped from her eye and landed on the fabric.

Panicked, she wiped it **away** with her sleeve.

But more followed. She tried to stop them, swallowing **hard**, breathing fast—but her tears betrayed her, one after another, **falling** like broken **beads** of **pain**.

Then—stab.

She pierced her finger. Blood welled from the tip, red and furious, and bloomed on the silk like a cursed flower. It spread, mixing with the tears already staining the cloth.

And in that moment—her strength shattered.

Riley collapsed over the table, shoulders shaking as she finally, fully broke down. Her sobs echoed in the quiet room, raw and unrestrained.

A storm **had** been building inside her for years—and **now**, it was **here**.

And no **garden**, no sunlight, no gentle breeze could save **her** from it.

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

[810 words]

Chapter 165

Third Person's POV

+8 Pearls

All those years of pain, injustice, and silent despair finally erupted like a dam that could no longer hold. Riley's sobs echoed within the room, **raw** and shattering, each cry dragging shards of anguish to the surface. Her shoulders trembled violently as she collapsed over the embroidery table, her fingers still stained with blood from the earlier prick, crimson blooming across the silk fabric like a cursed omen.

Unbeknownst to her, Lucien Duskgrave had been standing quietly behind her for a long while.

He had not announced his presence. He didn't need to.

As **Alpha** of the Stormridge Pack and heir to one of the oldest Lycan bloodlines, he had walked through fire, war, and political deception. **But none** of those battles had ever pierced him as deeply as the sight before him now—Riley, a she-wolf already **wounded** far too many times, finally crumbling under the weight of her grief.

He reached out, instinctively wanting to pull her into **his** arms. But his hand lingered in the air, frozen.

He didn't **know** if she would welcome the contact. Would it soothe her or push her further into darkness? She couldn't hear him. Her world **was silent**. And in that silence, she wept.

Lucien's chest ached. Not from helplessness—he had long since learned to move past that emotion—but from fury. Fury at a world that had allowed her to be broken this way. Fury at the Ebonclaw Pack. Fury at the so-called “parents” who had treated her like nothing more than a vessel—an organ donor to **be** gutted and discarded.

Soft, broken cries escaped from between her arms.

“What did I do wrong?” she choked out, her voice hoarse and cracked. “Why did they treat me like this?”

“You knew I wanted to belong... to have a family. And yet you used that against me. Am I really... so unlovable?”

Lucien's hand, still suspended, slowly lowered back to his side—then clenched into a tight fist. The skin around his knuckles turned white as bone.

He bent down slightly, whispering—uselessly, but with **all the** quiet conviction he could muster, “You are not unlovable.”

“**You're** everything they aren't. Strong. Brave. Worthy,”

“We all **see** it. We **all** see you.”

“They're the monsters. Not you*”

But she couldn't hear a word of it. Her sobs continued, gut-wrenching and sharp, as if each one was being torn from her soul.

The room filled with the sound of her crying. **And** just outside the open door, **three** women **stood** frozen in

in place.

Matriarch Duskgrave, usually **as** steady and composed as the mountains surrounding Stormridge, now stood with tears pooling in her ancient **eyes**. The regal silver in her hair shimmered faintly in the light, but even her long-**held** strength faltered in the face of Raley's sorrow.

Beside her, Mrs. Beck and **Mia** stood shoulder to shoulder, their expressions mirroring the same raw, maternal ache.

Not far off in the sitting room, Duke and Theo **had heard** it too.

Duke's hands slowly curled into **fists**. **His normally** tired **eyes** were now sharp with unfiltered rage. He gritted his teeth, jaw tight. Those fucking parasites, he muttered under his breath. “How dare they...”

All thoughts of rest vanished from his **mind** Fury **burned** through his veins, scorching away any remaining fatigue. In the next breath, he turned, storming out of the manor with thunder in his steps. The black SUV's door slammed behind him, **and**

the engine, the car tore down the gravel path, leaving **only** a fading roar and a cloud of dust in his wake

Back inside. Then stood rooted to the floor

350 PM p p.

Chapter 165

e tu boles

+5 Pearls

His lungs felt crushed. The room itself seemed heavier. saturated with something dark and unbearable. The sound of Riley crying so full of heartbreak and helplessness—**was** like a blade driving deeper into his chest with each passing second:

His thoughts spiraled. He had mocked her before. Doubted her. Caught her with Kael when she was trying to escape her hellish **family**. **And** now, every cruel word, every condescending glance, came back to haunt him.

A **wave** of **shame** rolled through him.

He had been blind Willfully blind.

And Riley...she had suffered **all** of it in silence.

Without saying a word. Theo turned and left the sitting room. His steps were swift and unsteady, his throat dry, his heart pounding **with** a shame he couldn't **shake**.

In the embroidery room, the light shifted as clouds slowly covered the sun. The once warm morning had turned grey, mirroring the storm **within** Riley's heart.

She still clutched the fabric, tears now streaking freely down her cheeks. Her entire frame trembled as her sobs softened into hoarse, broken gasps. She wanted to disappear. She wanted to scream. She wanted someone to come tell her that this—this entire nightmare—wasn't real.

But no such relief came.

Only the warm, unmoving shadow of Lucien Duskgrave behind her. Silent. Resolute.

He could do nothing to erase the past.

But he would burn the future to the ground before letting anyone hurt her **again**.

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294

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

[881 words]

Chapter 166

Third Person's POV

+8 Pearls

Carmen stood at the gates of **Ashmoor** Academy, her fingers clenching the handle of her **umbrella**. Mist curled around her feet like wary shadows, and though the clouds **above** hadn't broken, there was a trace of light in her **gaze**—hopeful, **tentative**

The sharp purr of an engine cut through the morning silence.

A sleek, black Maybach tore through the rain-slicked **road**, **spraying** water **into** the air. The vehicle was unmistakably elite- one only seen among high-ranking **Alphas**. Its tinted windows reflected the dull gray sky, its presence **commanding**

Carmen's breath caught.

That car—she recognized it.

Her heart leapt and a smile bloomed across her lips, the kind so rare it made her **look** almost too young, too untouched by the cruel world of pack politics. She raised her umbrella and **waved with** enthusiasm, fully believing he had returned for her.

Duke had said he would.

"I'll retrieve the umbrella myself tomorrow morning," he had told her with quiet **precision**, his voice smooth and unreadable.

But the car didn't stop.

Like a streak of shadow, the Maybach passed by without pause. The gust from its speed blew her hair across her face, and her umbrella twisted under the force of it. She stood stunned, her smile falling away as quickly **as** it **had** formed.

She turned slowly, her gaze locked onto the departing car. Her eyes narrowed at the license plate.

There was no mistake.

It was his

So much for his word.

So much for being different from the rest of the arrogant wolves in the Ebonclaw Pack. Just another promise from **a** man too **important** to remember a girl like her.

The light in her eyes extinguished, replaced by something colder—more calculating

Carmen's lips curled into **a** smile again, but this time it was **sharp**, almost predatory. A smile honed by betrayal and long nights of silence. She had **seen** what people like Duke were capable of. She'd seen **what** the Ebonclaw Pack did to Riley—a betrayal so deep, it poisoned Carmen's blood.

She had learned then: **no one** was coming to save her. And she didn't need them to.

Arrogance made people predictable. And predictable people were easy to manipulate.

She'd learned **how** to survive long before setting foot in Ashmoor Academy. Her mother **Mia** had scrubbed **packhouses** to the bone Riley had been discarded like trash by those **who** claimed nobility and honor. Carmen had watched it all—and remembered every name, every slight.

Til become strong enough to tear free from this city, she whispered to herself, her **voice** quiet and lethal. I'll **take** Riley and Mom away from Mooncrest, to a place where no one can find us Where we don't have to bow to **Alphas** or bloodlines

The words were a vow etched into her bones.

one last **glance** at the gate where the Maybach disappeared, Carmen turned and headed **back** to the dormitory Her steps were firm now, each one echoing with silent resolve.

She would **not** wait for kindness. **She** would not wait for men like Duke to remember her

Inade the dormitory, laughter rang out—sharp, grating and unmistakably cruel.

350 PM p p.

Chapter 166

“She’s **out**. She won’t be back any time soon. Hurry up before Carmen the psycho catches us.”

“Seriously, who does she think she is? Just a little servant–born rat trying to **act** all **Luna**–like”

“She’s from the gutter. And you know what they say–**trash** always stinks.”

“That’s whysifying. Let’s scrub the toilet with her toothbrush.”

it’s so

“I’ll use her towel to wipe my paws.”

“**I already** poured toilet water into **her shampoo**. **Wanna** add more?”

Carmen froze in the hallway, just before the door. She’d heard every **word**.

They didn’t **know** she was **there**.

+8 Pearls

They never believed someone like her **could** hold power. That someone with no name, no title, and no pureblood pedigree could rise above their cruelty.

Her fingers found the charm around **her** neck—a tarnished **pendant** that **had** once belonged to her father.

Carmen still remembered his final words before he disappeared: “Wolves with broken chains bite the hardest.”

She hadn’t understood them then.

Now, she did.

Carmen’s eyes turned razor–sharp in an instant, gleaming with a coldness **that** belonged more to a predator than a teenage girl. Her lips, however, curled upward into an eager grin. She looked electrified, like a she–wolf seconds away from sinking her fangs into prey. Her presence exuded **a** dangerous, almost feral energy—something primal and uncontainable.

Ever since those malicious rumors started spreading—whispers that she was some wealthy Alpha’s mistress—her reputation at Ashmoor University had rotted beyond repair. Students sneered. Professors stopped looking her in the eye. The air changed when she entered a room.

If it hadn’t been for Kael Vale, she would **have** been expelled.

But she **wasn’t** like her mother. She didn’t feel gratitude for that intervention.

Because she wasn’t stupid.

She knew exactly who started those rumors.

Kael had orchestrated **it** all. That fake act of coming to her rescue had nothing to do with her—it was all to manipulate Riley, her sister. Carmen had seen through his schemes from the start.

Ebonclaw **Pack wolves**, she thought with venom. Arrogant cowards who crushed others just to make themselves feel powerful

After the rumors took root, the girls in her dorm—**those who** used to share friendly conversations and late-night **snacks**- suddenly showed their fangs. They **came** from privileged packs, born into Beta bloodlines or future council houses, and the moment they sensed weakness, they pounced

They thought Carmen was soft. Quiet Easy.

They had no idea **what** she’d become

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[766 words]

Chapter 167

+8 Pearls

Third Person’s POV

Carmen **had** lived through Riley’s ruin. She had watched the light fade from her sister’s **eyes** after Alpha Alaric and his family tore her apart piece by piece. Carmen wasn’t the same girl she had been in **junior** high.

She had become something new—something sharp, vengeful, and ready to strike.

Carmen stood against the hallway's icy concrete wall, **arms** folded, waiting.

She didn't need to hear what they were doing inside.

She already knew.

Ten minutes passed.

Long enough.

Her toothbrush had been jammed deep into the dorm toilet, its bristles scraping the rim as one of the girls laughed. Her towel had been dragged across the bathroom floor and used to mop up grimy water. Her shampoo **and** body wash had been tainted with toilet water—again.

“Almost done. Let's clean up and head to the dining hall,” one of the girls chirped.

Then came the sound that froze every muscle in the room.

Click.

The dorm door opened slowly, and a sudden, deathly silence blanketed the air inside.

Carmen stood in the doorway, one hand still on the knob, a crooked **smile** playing on her lips. She leaned casually against the frame, eyes scanning the wreckage of her belongings.

“Well,” she said smoothly, voice like velvet over a blade. “You three seem to be having a great time.”

The **three** girls inside stood frozen. Their perfect makeup seemed to crack along with their courage. The blood drained from

their **faces**.

Carmen stepped into the room.

And locked the door behind her with a slow, deliberate click.

Panic flashed in their eyes like lightning in **a** storm.

“Y—you're back early?” one of them stammered, lips trembling under layers of glossy lip **stain**. “We—we were just tidying up a bit for you-

Carmen chuckled.

The sound was brittle, sharp, **and** bone-chilling. It cut through the silence like the snap of a frozen branch in the dead of

Winter

Her peach-blossom **eyes** shimmered with a **kind** of quiet **madness**.

“Oh If **you** liked my toiletries that much, you only had to ask.” Her voice was light, almost **kind**—but beneath it thrummed a power that made the walls seem to press in “They’re yours now.”

The girls shifted uneasily. They couldn’t read her. They **didn’t** know what came next. **And** that terrified them more than any

oven threat

Then Carmen raised her hand and pointed directly at the bathroom door

“Inside All of you

Chapter 167

Her voice dropped to ice.

“I want to see you use everything Toothbrush. Shampoo. Body wash. Towel. Everything. While I watch.”

Their lip quivered, “N–no, we can use our own, really-

The smile vanished from Carmen’s face.

What replaced it was pure frost.

“I wasn’t asking”

From her coat pocket, Carmen pulled out a butterfly knife.

+8 Pearls

With **a flick** of her wrist, the blade danced through the air in a deadly bloom of metal. She twirled it with practiced grace, the sharpened edges catching the dim overhead light with every motion.

The girls backed into the corner like trapped prey.

They whimpered, “P—please don’t do anything crazy... we were wrong, okay? We’re sorry-

Carmen didn’t blink.

“Sorry?” she said sweetly. “One sorry to erase everything? I must look very easy to fool.”

She advanced one step.

“You remember what I told you two months ago?”

The girls shuddered in unison.

Of course they remembered.

Carmen had once cornered them in the hallway, her knife cold against the small of their backs, whispering in a voice that **haunted** their nightmares:

“You can bully me, but I can kill you. One life for three. That’s a trade I’m happy to make.”

Tears welled up in their eyes now. They clung to each other, their pride shattered, their bravado long gone.

And Carmen just watched.

Smiling.

Eventually, under her command—and her **knife**—they filed into the bathroom. They scrubbed their teeth **with** the tainted **brush**, **washed** their **hair** with the contaminated **shampoo**, rubbed their bodies clean with the towel they had desecrated.

Carmen remained in the doorway, arms folded, **watching** in serene silence.

Her

r smile was still there, but it had no warmth. No life.

Only control

“Good girls,” she said at last. “Now we understand each other,”

Because that’s the **truth**, wasn’t it?

Snakes needed **fangs**.

Not to strike, but to survive

Because

And Car

– matter how much **you** covered, begged, or hid—there would **always** be someone waiting to strike first.

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48 Pearls

She'd rather be the first to bite.

As the girls sobbed and scrambled to their beds. Carmen turned toward the door, her expression unreadable. She ran a **hand** through her dark hair and exhaled slowly.

Her thoughts shifted back to the Maybach

The man who **had** promised her a return

Duke

He had driven past like she didn't **exist**.

But she wouldn't let **that** be the end.

Her fingers flexed slightly, as if already imagining grabbing his collar.

Looks like I'll be heading to **the** Silverlang Den tonight, she **thought** coldly.

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

[887 words]

Chapter 168

Third–Person POV

+2 Pearls

Sunlight filtered through the mottled leaves outside Mooncrest First Pack Hospital, casting shifting shadows across the sterile corridor. Inude, the air was thick with disinfectant, but it couldn't mask the stench of rot hospital always associated with the

Ebonclaw Pack

A sleek black car pulled up to the emergency bay. The door swung open, and Duke stepped out, expression grim. He moved with purpose, trading his tailored suit for a doctor's white coat and **slipping a** surgical mask over his **face**, revealing only his sharp, calculating eyes.

No one questioned his presence. He belonged in every room he entered, whether by command or by **force**.

He made his way down the corridor and pushed open the door to Alpha **Alaric's** recovery suite.

The so-called patriarch of the Ebonclaw Pack was lounging against the pillows like some bloated monarch, fingers lazily swiping across his phone screen. He barely looked up **as Duke** entered, mistaking him for yet another physician on the morning rounds.

Alaric smirked at his phone, clearly enjoying a flirtatious exchange. The recipient? Dean Elira Blackthorn, no doubt. The way his lecherous smile curled at the edges was enough to make any decent wolf retch.

Duke's hands clenched into fists.

All he **saw** was the monster who had destroyed Riley's life and twisted the fates of two generations for power.

He stepped forward—silent, swift.

Before Alaric could react, Duke yanked out a foul-smelling sock from his **coat** pocket and rammed it into **the** Alpha's mouth with brutal force.

Alaric's eyes went wide, confusion turning to horror.

His fingers shot up to pull the sock free, but Duke's hand clamped down like an iron vice. With a sudden jerk, he seized both wrists **and crack!** crack!

The sound of dislocating joints echoed in the sterile air. The Alpha let out a muffled scream of agony, **writhing** as white-hot **pain** surged through his arms.

Duke didn't stop.

He punched Alaric **square** across the **face**, over **and** over, his knuckles colliding with bone **and** cartilage until the **Alpha's** features were barely recognizable. Blood sprayed **across** the crisp hospital sheets. The freshly-healed bones in Alaric's leg-shattered once again under Duke's boot

Another crack—**this one** deeper. **Final**

The Alpha of the Ebonclaw Pack let out a strangled gurgle before going limp, his body slumping **like** a broken puppet.

Finally

Duke exhaled. The rage that had festered in him for years, that had kept him **awake at** night, **was** momentarily silenced. He straightened, chest heaving, **as** if he had just exorcised a demon from **his soul**

Then he turned.

And saw Theo Hale standing in the doorway.

Theus fare was pale, eyes wide behind his glasses. For once, the doctor had no smug words, no side remarks

"You're insane." Theo muttered "The room has surveillance What were **you** thinking

Duke didn't flinch. He raised a brow

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"So what's the noble healer going to do? Turn me in?"

Theo **glanced** back at the bloodied **wreckage** of Alpha Alaric, then at the door. His lips pressed into a tight line.

"Go. I'll take care of the footage."

Duke stepped toward him and clapped a **hand** on his shoulder.

"Knew I liked you for a reason. Drinks on me tonight."

The night descended on Mooncrest in a blaze of neon and thumping bass.

+8 Pearls

Inside Silverfang Den, the city's most **notorious** bar, music pounded like war drums. The crowd was wild, half drunk, half feral. Exactly the kind of place where secrets disappeared.

Duke and Theo sat in **a** shadowed corner booth, downing one **glass** after another.

Duke drank to burn **away** the image of Riley's suffering—the memory of her bloodied hands and broken voice.

Theo drank for different reasons.

Each sip dulled the memory of **his** own cruelty—the sharp words he'd once hurled at Riley, the way he had laughed at her pain alongside Kael Vale. Now every bitter drop reminded him of what a **coward** he'd been.

A fool.

A traitor in healer's robes

Hours blurred. Glasses clinked Laughter grew louder.

Eventually, Theo collapsed sideways onto the leather couch, passed out cold.

Duke, still somewhat lucid, stumbled toward the bar's exit, breath fogging in the chill air outside. He pulled off his glasses, tugged at his collar, and dropped heavily onto the curb.

He needed the

cold.

He needed to feel something other than rage.

But he wasn't alone.

From a shadowed corner of the bar, Carmen had been watching the two men all night, her expression unreadable. Now, seeing Duke alone and exposed, she moved.

She approached **with** the grace of a predator.

Duke looked up **just** in time to see **a** slender girl step into the glow of the streetlamp. She held an umbrella in her hand, and her voice was soft—almost innocent.

“Sir, your umbrella.”

Her **tone** was gentle, almost **hesitant**. Her eyes were wide, shimmering like the sea under moonlight.

She looked like a harmless, polite girl offering **a kindness**.

But Duke's instincts twitched

He knew a wolf in sheep's clothing when he saw one.

Carmen smiled sweetly

Inude the **bar**, Theo Hale **stirred on the couch—just in** time to feel a burning sting **across his** cheek

Chapter 168

Carmen's slap echoed like a whip track.

She stood over him, eyes blazing with fury.

She knew him. Theo had once stood by Kael Vale, **had** once called Riley names, laughed at her tears.

Carmen would never forget that.

"Trash, she muttered.

Then she turned on her heel and left Theo bleeding and stunned, stalking after Duke.

1

+8 Pearls

s

Because any man who was friends with **those** monsters from the Ebonclaw Pack—Kael Vale, Theo Hale, even Duke—was no better than the rest.

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

[829 words]

Chapter 169

Third-Person POV

-5 Rearts

Outside the Silverfang Den, the wind rolled low across the alley like a lurking beast, brushing past the neon signs and rattling loose beer bottles in the gutter. The buzz of the city dulled behind the door, but Carmen didn't mind. Her eyes were fixed on the man sitting alone by the curb—Duke.

He looked like he had fallen from grace, albeit elegantly

His tie was **half**—loosened like a dying snake curled against his collarbone. He had taken off his gold-rimmed glasses **and** was leaning **back** slightly, letting the night air cool his flushed skin. His shirt was unbuttoned at the top, revealing sharp lines and a dancer's strength that rose and fell subtly with every breath

Carmen's gaze trailed to his throat.

That pale, graceful neck, marked faintly where his glasses had pressed earlier, was an invitation—a promise of vulnerability Her fingers twitched involuntarily. Something primal stirred within her, not unlike a **wolf** scenting prey in the dark woods. She didn't even try to suppress the thought: That **neck** must feel divine under my fingers

It wasn't desire. Not really. It was the thrill of domination.

She moved forward, slipping from the shadows like moonlight through fog. Her steps were light, calculated, the white shirt she wore clinging softly to her spine, outlining every sharp curve of her body. Her face, however, was innocence painted to perfection—wide eyes, bowed lips, and a voice like velvet snowfall.

“Sir.. your umbrella.”

She offered the sleek black umbrella forward with both hands, lowering her gaze like a well-trained Omega approaching a dominant Alpha.

Duke tilted his head **upward**, his vision still foggy with liquor. His cheeks were flushed, shadows clinging under his eyes. He looked up at her, blinking slowly, trying to focus.

Carmen's **smile** deepened, subtle and indulgent.

His throat moved as he swallowed, the line of his Adam's apple sliding beneath perfect skin. Her stare locked **on** it like a predator watching a heartbeat beneath fur.

Before she could stop herself, her hand lifted—drifting closer to his throat, as if drawn by invisible threads.

Just as her fingertips were about to **graze his** skin, Duke's voice rumbled through the haze, hoarse and dazed.

"You who **are** you?"

So He'd forgotten her already.

Or was it the alcohol talking?

Carmen's

's lips curved **into** a lazy, teasing smile. Her fingers twirled mid-air and instead of reaching for his neck, she redirected her **hand**—gently but firmly gripping his jaw. She tilted his chin **up**, studying his flushed face as if examining a rare, exotic beast

"You don't remember me, sir?"

Her voice was honey-laced mockery,

Duke's mind was a maze of haze and bourbon He frowned, **waving off** her hand clumsily and attempting to **stand**. His polished shoes scraped against the pavement as he stumbled forward, **nearly** crashing to the ground

Carmen's reflexes were fast

She reached out and **caught him** around the waist, her palm sliding **across** hard muscle. Her brows lifted slightly—tight.

Chapter 169

carved abis Nice. She gave an experimental squeeze.

Duke winced, letting out a pained grunt, his brow furrowed.

"G—Get off, he slurred,

ying to push her away

+ Pearls

Carmen released him—sharply

He crashed to the concrete **with** a heavy thud, the **sound** echoing off the alley walls. That fall seemed to **shake** some of the hare out of his brain. He groaned, propping himself up with one hand, trying to reorient himself.

From above, Carmen watched, the corners of her lips curled in amusement. **But** when Duke looked back at her eyes clearer now, pupils adjusting—her expression shifted instantly.

Gone was the mischief,

In its place bloomed a mask of worry, her posture folding down into concern **as** she crouched beside him.

“Sir, are you alright?” Her voice trembled slightly, as if she were genuinely **distressed**.

Duke blinked, adjusting his glasses. Now that his vision was no longer swimming, he could finally see her face—young, beautiful, full of anxious energy. Her hand was still clutching the umbrella like it was the last thing tethering her to sanity.

“You?” he said, recognition dawning.

Her eyes lit up with staged delight. “So you do remember me!”

Duke’s frown deepened. “What are you doing here?”

Carmen’s lashes fluttered, and she glanced away shyly. Her tone dropped, soft as a whisper. “I... I wanted to return your umbrella.

She raised it slightly, as if **that** small gesture explained everything.

Duke’s eyes narrowed.

He wasn’t **that drunk** anymore. **And he wasn’t an** idiot.

After so many years serving beside **Lucien** Duskgrave, the **Alpha** Prince of the Stormridge Pack, he had **learned** to sniff out **arabition** behind sweet smiles, to hear lies laced in innocent tones. The number of **women** who had tried to get close to them through flattery or favors? Countless,

And **now** here she was. Another girl with a cute face and a story too clean to be real.

“You knew I’d be here tonight?” His voice, still gravelly from drink, took on a sharper edge. “How?”

Carmen’s eyes dropped. Her lashes cast shadows over her cheeks. Inside, her mind raced.

So he **was** sharper than she expected. This one wasn't the type to be led around by the nose. Not **so** easily, anyway

Still, **she had** prepared for this.

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[731 words]

Chapter 170

+8 Pearls

Third Person's POV

When Duke looked up, the calculating gleam that had briefly flashed in Carmen's eyes was completely gone. Her expression **had** shifted flawlessly—her gaze now wide and clear, her voice trembling ever so slightly, like that of an earnest, helpless student.

"I didn't see you this **morning**," she said softly, clutching **the** umbrella tighter. "So I thought maybe I'd **find** you here."

There was an innocence in her tone, but beneath it lay a kind of quiet persistence.

Duke frowned, trying to summon clarity through the haze of alcohol. Morning- yes, he'd driven past Ashmoor University on **his** way to report to Lucien Duskgrave. His mind **had** been clouded by anger, storming over Ebonclaw affairs—he hadn't spared a second thought for the **promise** he'd **made** to this girl **about** picking up the umbrella.

He **gave** a tired **nod**, some of the tension in his shoulders **casing** "I see that's why."

He tried **to** stand, but his knees **buckled** beneath **him**. His body was heavy with drink, and his limbs no longer obeyed.

"I'll help you," Carmen said, rushing forward.

Duke glanced at her again. She was trying **hard**, genuinely straining to support him.

What he didn't **know**—what **Carmen** would never say aloud—was that she hadn't just come

She'd looked into **him**.

o return the umbrella.

Duke, assistant to Prince Lucien of the Stormridge Pack. Loyal. Sharp. Trusted by one of the most powerful heirs in the werewolf world. He wasn't just some forgetful rich guy. He was a potential weapon—or at least, a key.

She'd started digging the moment she saw that black Maybach outside Ashmoor University. And the more she uncovered **about** Duke's position, the more she knew: he **was** her way in.

After **all**, wasn't it always the people behind the throne who made the best targets?

Carmen had learned the **hard** way—since Riley was dragged down by the Ebonclaw Pack and her mother discarded like refuse—that brute force wasn't always the most effective path **to** vengeance. **But** infiltration? That she could do.

And if Duke happened to have the kind of face that made her **stomach** flutter, well... that was just fate **making** things easier.

She didn't need to love **him**. She just needed him to look at her like she mattered.

Back on the sidewalk, Cannen managed to half-carry, half-drag Duke toward his car. His tall frame leaned heavily on her slender one and he groaned **as** his head lolled back **against** the headrest when she finally got him into the back seat.

"You drive?" he mumbled.

"Yes" she answered simply

He fished his keys from **his** coat and handed them to her without **another** word "Take me home."

Carmen slid behind the wheel, her expression composed, calculating The moment his **eyes** closed and his breathing deepened she turned her head **ever so** slightly—toward the luxury apartment complex address he'd muttered:

Her lips curled

Perfec

The Maybach pulled up to one of Mooncrest's wealthiest districts—Stormridge **Alpha** Quarter, where political elites and ancient bloo—llines made their dens

Carmen helped Duke up the **stairs**, scanning the entranceway and hallway for **cameras**. Her senses sharpened, she could almost feel the presence of surveillance near the front. But when they reached the bedroom—spacious, warm—tones, and

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impeccably decorated—she found **none**.

Good

She dropped him unceremoniously onto the bed.

+8 Pearls

The **wolf** inside her was calm, but her mind spun with strategies. The room smelled of cedarwood and something distinctly

male. His scent.

Carmen's gaze flicked to the bedside drawer, the gleam of metal—maybe a weapon inside. She made note of it and then turned back to the man passed out on the bed.

“Sir?” she called sweetly.

No answer.

“Sir?” she repeated, louder this time.

Still nothing. His breathing was deep and even.

So she moved.

She tore at her own shirt, letting the **buttons** scatter across the room like the **beginning** of chaos. Tugged her hair loose. Let it fall messily across her face. She mussed the bed, scratched at her collarbone **until** it bloomed red, **then** stumbled out of the **bedroom**, dragging sobs from her throat

“Don't—**don't** touch me! Please—1”

Her voice echoed down the hallway, high—pitched and full of feigned terror.

She bolted out the front door and into the street, shirt gaping open in the cold night air, a trembling silhouette under the **glow** of the lamplight. The late—night wind caught her hair as she walked with stumbling **steps**, sobs wracking her **shoulders**.

To anyone watching, she looked like a broken **thing**.

But Carmen–Carmen wasn't broken.

She **was** playing the long game.

And tonight, she **had** just placed the first piece on the board.

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

[857 words]

Chapter 171

Third Person's POV

Carmen hadn't walked far when she suddenly sensed it.

A **faint** footstep. A presence.

Someone was following her.

Tch

+8 Pearls

She narrowed her eyes ever so slightly. Was it a rogue from outside the borders? A drunk predator from another **pack**? Or just someone with poor timing and worse instincts?

She had originally planned to head straight **back** to Ashmoor University. But now

A more interesting idea bloomed in her mind.

Without changing her pace, Carmen let her sharp gaze flick subtly around **the** moonlit street. There–mounted on a stone lamppost **was a** gleaming wolf–tech surveillance **orb**, glowing with **that** signature silver–blue core. It was linked to the Stormridge Guard Network.

Her lips curled

As long as she remained within that range, whoever was behind her wouldn't dare make a move.

But she didn't **want to stay** safe

She wanted to bait him.

Purposefully, Carmen turned **and** strolled into a **narrow, shadow**-drenched alley just outside the surveillance's view. The cobblestones were damp, **and** the walls of ancient stone rose on either side like silent witnesses.

She moved calmly, pulling a communication stone from her satchel—engraved with a sigil that allowed direct contact to the Mooncrest Watch **Division**.

She **activated** it with her blood imprint, her voice trembling as she whispered, "Patrol? **This** is Carmen Hawthorne. I'm at **Raven** Hollow Alley, just west of the Stormridge Quarter. I'm being followed... Please **send** a **guardian quickly**... I'm **scared**..

As the enchantment closed, silencing the spell, she slipped the stone **back** into her **cloak**.

Just **as** she stepped **back** into the half-light, her **stalker** emerged from the darkness at the end of the alley. Under the pale moon, she could make out his frame—a tall, **broad**-shouldered male, hood low, **reeking** of damp fur and **bad intentions**.

Carmen smiled.

"Oh Followed me all **this** way? What's the matter? Did I **catch** your eye, handsome?"

The man froze, confused. He clearly hadn't expected **such a** reaction.

She sauntered toward him with sugar on her voice. "**There's an** inn just down the street. Why don't we go there together?"

The man **blinked** "What the ?"

Before he could step back Carmen was close enough to loop her arms loosely around his **neck, warm breath** fanning against

"Come on. Alpha" ale purred. "Don't you want to play!"

Her touch was light, her tone teasing—but her heart was coil **like** a serpent

The male **grinned his gaze raking** over her “Didn’t expect a sweet **little** thing like you to be this cager™

C

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“Oh?” she said sweetly, catching the glint of lust in his eyes. “You don’t like it?”

“I like it fine,” he breathed, **hands** twitching toward her waist.

And that was when she struck.

With the precision of a trained Ashmoor student, she drove her knee straight into his groin.

The **man** screamed, crumpling like wet parchment. He hit the cobblestones **hard**, gasping, clutching himself.

+8 Pearls

Carmen took three graceful steps back. hair tousled, shirt torn just enough to sell the illusion. She stood still, watching him writhe.

“Little bitch...he spat through the pain. “You think this is over? I’ll tear your throat out!”

He lunged toward her **again**, full of rage and humiliation.

Carmen let out a shrill, practiced scream and turned on her heel, sprinting back toward the **main** road.

The predator chased her blindly.

They broke into the open street, just before the Stormridge Alpha Quarter gate—where crystal-lit lanterns illuminated every angle and enchanted cameras whirred silently atop the gate towers. Two sentries stood post nearby.

Perfect

Carmen let herself slow

She let him grab her wrist.

“Let go of me—NO—HELP—!”

Her scream cut through the midnight air like a blade.

“You scream **now?** Too late, whore-!” the **man** snarled, yanking at her already-torn shirt, the fabric shredding under his claws.

Carmen collapsed to her knees, covering her chest with her arms. Her pale skin shimmered under the **lamplight**, body trembling, eyes wide and glistening with fear.

The patrol wolves arrived in a blur of steel **and silver sigils**.

Two guards leapt between them, pinning the rogue male to the ground, shackling him in anti-shift restraints as he bellowed in fury

“Don’t touch **me!** I didn’t do anything-

Carmen laddled in silence, hair a tangled **curtain**, eyes wide with tears—yet behind that mask, her lips curled into the faintest most satisfying smile

Everything **was** going exactly **as** planned

The Next Morning – Duke’s Apartment

Morning sunlight filtered **through** the heavy **velvet** curtains of the Stormridge high-rise, slicing across Duke’s face **like a**

He groaned, suelding his eyes **with** one hand. His temples pounded **as** if a war drum was beating inside his skull.

Everything ached. His mouth was dry His head **was** full of fog **and** static

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+8 Pearls

His bed sheets were tangled, the floor littered with **unfamiliar** objects—shirt buttons, strands of hair that weren’t his, and a broken perfume vial that didn’t belong to anyone who lived here.

Duke’s expression darkened.

Something wasn’t right.

He reached for the console embedded in his nightstand and called up the internal camera records of the apartment.

There she was.

Carmen Hawthorne. The girl from Ashmoor University. The one with the umbrella.

She was shown helping him in—struggling with **his** weight. guiding him gently.

Duke sighed with relief... **until** the footage changed.

There she was again, later—**tears** pouring down her **face**, clutching her shirt, running out the door.

“What the hell...” he muttered, eyes narrowing.

He hit pause, stared at the frozen **image**.

Was this real?

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

[891 words]

Chapter 172

Third Person's POV

Duke's eyes widened in disbelief, golden irises almost glowing from shock.

Had he really lost control last night? Did **his wolf** act on its **own**?

No. No. Absolutely not.

He wasn't **that kind** of man. He wasn't **that kind** of wolf.

And yet the surveillance footage didn't lie. Carmen Hawthorne had entered his apartment... and then fled in tears, disheveled and terrified.

He gritted his teeth.

Duke couldn't **remember** a damn thing from last night—but the ache in his temples told him he had indeed been dangerously drunk. **And** the look on her face in that recording?

He couldn't ignore it..

He had to find her.

+8 Pearls

After a quick wash **and** a change into a navy blue **patrol** jacket, Duke headed to the door—only to halt when his eyes landed. on the black, high—grade wolfskin umbrella resting **against** the **entrance** bench.

The Maybach crest.

Memory flickered—the girl... standing at the bar's entrance... her hand offering the umbrella...

He must've asked her to bring him home. Gods.

He cursed under his **breath**.

What the hell had he been thinking? He didn't **even** know her name. They'd only met twice.

Duke grabbed **his** coat and exited the suite.

Inside the lift, the idle voices of two older pack matriarchs reached his ears.

"Did you hear what happened last night? A rogue tried to corner a young she—wolf near **the** Alpha **Quarter** gates."

"i saw it on the patrol network this morning! If the guards hadn't arrived—Moon Goddess bless her..."

"Girls these days—what are they doing out **past** moonrise? No sense of safety"

The chill ran up Duke's **spine** like a blade.

They couldn't possibly mean...

The one who helped him home!

A cruilang sense of **guilt** surged **through** Jum. If she was attacked because of **him**—because he **asked** her to bring him home.

He turned around at once and headed to the Stormridge Guard Hall.

Within **minutes** he was hunched over the console, reviewing last night's perimeter footage

There she wa

D

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+8 Pearls

Her blouse torn, face pale, clutching herself **as** she stumbled toward the gate, a rogue male dragging behind her. Her eyes wide **with** fear. Her body trembling. The guards tackling the male seconds later.

Duke's stomach twisted **into** knots.

It was real.

He clenched the edge of the desk until his knuckles turned **white**.

She nearly got violated. Because of him.

He had to find her. Now.

But **there** was one problem—he still didn't know her full name.

So he took the next step. He went to the Watch Commander's Office and requested the incident report. His status as Beta- Assistant under **Alpha** Storm allowed him direct access.

There

he found it.

Carmen Hawthorne. Ashmoor University. Emergency contact recorded. Location: the Lunar Crest Café.

Lunar Crest Café – Across from Ashmoor University

The afternoon sun poured in through the high crystal windows, bathing the wood-paneled walls in soft golden light. The warmth did little to calm the tension at the small corner table where Duke sat across from Carmen.

She looked... fragile.

Her hands were clenched around her dress sleeves, knuckles pale, shoulders curled inward. Her eyes darted **around** nervously, as if she expected danger to leap from every corner.

Duke's throat tightened.

She looked like a frightened fawn cornered by a beast.

"I'm sorry," **Duke** finally **said**, voice rough with guilt. "For last night."

Carmen's lips trembled as she tried to lift her cup of herbal brew. The porcelain clinked **against** the saucer from the tremor in her hands. Her fingers barely steadied the **handle**.

She looked like she'd been through hell.

And Duke felt like the one who'd dragged her into it.

If he hadn't let himself get **drunk**

If he hadn't asked her to bring **him** home....

If she hadn't been **walking back** alone through the lower **alley** outside the patrol grid

"I was-" he began **again**, **I was drunk**. That's not an excuse, but it's the truth"

Carmen shook her head **quickly**, stammering. "T-it's it's **not** your fault, sir **I know** you're a good person."

Her voice benke, and tears welled in her lashes She **blinked** them back **quickly** curling in on herself even more **like** a pup weathering a storm

Duke inhaled sharply, guilt ripping through him. He reached into his coat **and** placed **a** carved wooden token on the table Sturridge payment sigil etched with his personal crest

"It's a compensation token" he said quietly "There's a hundred **thousand marks** linked to a From my personal vault. For the

piciend

150 P P P .

Chapter 172

Carmen didn't **speak**. Her head dropped **lower**, **and** her **long fringe** veiled **most** of **her face**.

Duke **assumed** she was offended. That he'd insulted her pride.

What he didn't see **what no** one saw—**was** the flicker of glee behind those lowered lashes.

Hook Line. Sinker.

+8 Pearls

Carmen wanted to laugh **with triumph**, but she kept her body perfectly still. Her fingers trembled with perfectly calculated grace Tears clung to her lashes, unfallen. It was an art

She **had** pulled it off.

Shallow wounds, deep rewards.

Inside, she was already **planning** her next move. The moment the token was hers, she'd begin preparations.

Tomorrow, she'd vanish. With these money. **She** and Riley would finally leave this cursed territory. Away **from** the packs. **Away** from hierarchy. Just them, free.

As for **Duke**?

Carmen spared him a glance.

He really **was** her type—**refined**, powerful, oblivious,

But no man, no matter how attractive, could compare to what Riley had given her purpose.

She wrapped her **arms** around herself and let out a faint sob.

Across the table, Duke looked at her helplessly, guilt sinking deeper into **his** bones.

Neither noticed the surveillance raven perched just beyond the café window, its mirrored **eyes** glinting in the sun.

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

[980 words]

Chapter 173

+B Pearls

Third Person's POV

Duke softened his voice, mistaking the silence in Carmen's eyes for lingering trauma. "This isn't meant to shame you," he **said** gently, sliding the polished golden sigil across the table. "I truly **want to make** things right."

Carmen slowly raised her gaze, tear-filled eyes shimmering with watery light. Her fragile, pitiful **face** looked like it had endured the cruelest injustice.

"I.. nothing happened. You don't need to give me anything, my lord," she murmured.

"Take it." Duke said earnestly, pushing the sigil **closer**. "Otherwise. I'll never have peace"

Carmen wanted to snatch the crest immediately—one flash of **that** sigil, and she'd have access to enough gold to fund her escape and Riley's journey.

But the act had to go on.

She hesitated visibly, brows furrowed, lips **trembling** like she was torn between dignity and desperation.

Duke remained patient. "It's not charity. It's compensation. Please."

Just as Carmen slowly reached for the sigil, eyes wet, a sharp voice tore through the still air behind them.

"Well, well, look who we have here! Isn't this Ashmoor's prized scholarship pup, Carmen Hawthorne?"

The shrill female voice carried a venomous delight.

"Didn't expect to see you here, little Carmen," a mocking male voice followed. "Found yourself another noble wolf to leech from?"

Duke and Carmen turned around simultaneously.

A young she-wolf and her companion—both unknown to Carmen—stood **smirking** behind them.

The she-wolf **wore** a **thick** layer of powder, trying hard to hide the meanness in her eyes, while the male wolf lounged with **an** arrogant smirk, clearly enjoying the moment.

Carmen narrowed her **eyes**.

Since that incident with Kael Vale that nearly got her expelled from **Ashmoor**, it felt like every wolf at the academy believed she **was** fair game. Some whispered, some taunted. She could ignore it—until someone got in her way.

Like now.

A chill passed through her gaze.

Those two just ruined her best shot at **claiming** that sigil.

The pair turned their attention to Duke, who clearly hadn't expected such a **public** scene. Their mocking expressions faltered when they **saw** him **up** close.

Duke, in his crisp midnight-blue tunic marked with Beta sigils, looked like nobility incarnate. His pale gold hair, perfectly combed shimmered **under** the soft sunlight. His golden-rimmed lenses sat neatly on a chiseled **nose**. The strength in his jawline, the dignity in his posture—he exuded grace and danger.

The gazes dropped to the rune-bound crest **on** his wrist—crafted by the Silverfang artisans. The sigil pulsed taintly, a sign of his rank and wealth

jealousy flared in the male's eyes

ultimately

alf-blood? She didn't deserve a wolf like **that**

1. p.

Chapter 173

8 Pearls

“Sir, you don't know what you're dealing with,” the she-wolf sneered. “She's been crawling around nobles' dens since spring”

“Almost got banished for it,” the male added eagerly. “If her dying mother hadn't begged the Headmaster on her knees, she wouldn't **even be** at Ashmoor”

“Now she’s clawing for your coin,” the girl said. “Don’t fall for her tears.”

Their words dripped with calculated venom. They hadn’t seen what Carmen had endured, yet they paraded their slander like truth

Duke turned to Carmen, eyes filled with unease **and** disbelief.

She was **so** close.

Carmen clenched her jaw, forcing her hands to tremble in perfect rhythm with her rising chest.

If she took the gold now, and Duke found out what Kael had done. he might turn on her. Worse, he might discover the truth about Riley.

She couldn’t risk it.

Not for money. Not yet.

She bit her tongue hard, coppery blood flooding her mouth.

Tears welled again. She pushed Duke’s hand away.

“I never... I never wanted your money,” she whispered brokenly. “Last night was an accident. It wasn’t your fault.”

Then she bolted from the table, shoving **past** the couple and dashing for the door.

Duke stood up immediately.

But the **male** wolf stepped in front of him, **blocking** his **path**.

“She’s lying,” **he** said coldly. “Girls like her don’t deserve sympathy.”

Duke’s golden eyes darkened.

“Are **my** affairs **yours** to judge?” he **asked**, voice **low** and dangerously calm.

The wolf flinched.

Duke stepped past him **and** strode toward the exit.

Carmen had already crossed the road, nearly **back** within the university’s shadow.

“Carmen” he shouted, the name rolling off his tongue from memory.

Carmen froze.

Her back stiffened, the fury in her gaze burning like wildfire. She clenched her **fists**.

Damn it!

She had almost succeeded—**almost**. Those two rotten mulis cost her a clean victory:

Still, there ought to be a second chance.

She turned around, masking her rage instantly.

But what **the saw** next stopped her dead.

Across the street a faraboyantly dr d male wolf launched himself at Duke- linging to him **like** a cub to its size.

3:51 PM

Chapter 173

+8 Pearls

YOU ABANDONED ME!" the wolf wailed. "I WAS LOCKED IN THAT BATHHOUSE FOR TWO DAYS! I HATE YOU! I HATE YOU?"

Duke staggered backward, nearly knocking over a street lamp.

He blinked down at the wolf sobbing into his chest.

"Andie?" he asked, stunned.

The **wolf was** a mess—**hair** in dreadlocks, cheeks scratched, clothes shredded. He reeked of damp stone and fermented sweat.

Duke grimaced.

Andie, **usually immaculate** and proud, now looked like he'd been dragged through **a sewer**.

"I TOLD YOU NEVER TO LEAVE ME!" Andie continued, punching Duke's chest weakly like a jilted mate.

Carmen stared.

Mouth open.

Eyes round.

What. The actual. Hell.

So... Duke wasn't interested in **women**?

No **wonder** he was so... well-maintained.

She scoffed and turned on her heel, storming back into campus without another glance.

"Waste of time," she muttered. "Stupid pretty boy. Just wanted to make himself feel better."

If he gave her the gold, it was probably just to clean his conscience,

Disgusting-

The week passed quietly.

But Carmen hadn't forgotten.

She was just waiting for the perfect night.

And **on** a moonless evening, beneath the thick canopy of the Mooncrest forest, she struck.

Draped in black, face hidden beneath a **cloak**, she waited like a **shadow**.

When the couple from the cafe strolled in, laughing and whispering, she moved

The male didnt even see it coming

A single, brutal kick

He crumpled, howling in agony

The she-wall turned, screamed-

Tou late

Carmen raised a stone slab, brought it down hard.

Again

d

Chapter 173

And again

Her **cloak** fluttered like a vulture's wings in the dark.

The forest swallowed the sound.

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294

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

[769 words]

Chapter 174

Third Person's POV

A sharp, bone-cracking thud split the silence of the woods.

★ +8 Pearls

behind

The girl's shriek was cut short as four front teeth flew from her mouth, mingling **with** a spray of blood. Her nasal bone cracked audibly, and she collapsed next to her boyfriend, her screams of agony echoing through the moonlit grove Ashmoor Academy.

Carmen stood above them, expression **calm**, her breathing steady. No **panic**. No hesitation. She had **executed this like** a well-rehearsed maneuver.

With a **cold** gleam in her **eyes**, she turned, swiftly **vanishing** into the shadows of the trees. Moments later, she crouched beside a half-buried rock, stripped off her jacket, gloves, and face **mask**, tossing the bloodied garments into a shallow pit. She flicked open a lighter, and with a **hiss** and crackle, flames devoured the evidence until nothing remained but ash **and** scorched soil.

The next day, the couple reported the attack, but despite the pack patrol **and** enforcers sweeping the scene, not a single clue was found. No scent trail. No witnesses. No silver to catch. Carmen had planned this **too** well.

Her attack wasn't driven by the frustration of losing a million-credit payout—though it certainly stung. No, it was because of Riley,

Her sister.

Every day Lucien Duskgrave kept Riley locked inside the Duskgrave estate, was another day she suffered under a gilded cage of silence and **secrets**. Carmen couldn't allow that. Anyone who delayed her mission to save Riley would pay **in blood**. That couple had chosen the wrong night to interfere.

While Carmen was settling scores in her own ruthless way, Riley remained trapped in the Duskgrave manor.

For seven days, she hadn't stepped beyond the stone walls. **Each** morning, she resumed work on **Matriarch** Duskgrave's cherished **embroidery** project—a sprawling silk rendering of a white peony, the sigil flower of **the** Stormridge Pack.

By the seventh day, Caelum Knox finally returned.

In the high tower office of the **Duskgrave** estate, Lucien stood silently behind his **broad** oak desk. **The air** around him was thick, cold, the way it always felt before a storm broke.

Caelum placed a thick leather-bound folder onto the desk. **The** weight of the truth thudded against the wood.

“All the intel on the Ebonclaw Pack is here,” Caelum said, his voice low.

Lucien said nothing at first. He opened the folder with slender fingers. **Page** after page revealed names, dates, medical records, education histories—details Riley herself had likely never seen. **And** with each turn of the **page**, his brows drew closer together, the fury in his golden eyes simmering hotter.

He had known the Ebonclaw **Park was** ruthless.

But this this was monstrous.

The **truth** clawed at his gut. Riley had been not merely neglected, but gutted, drained, betrayed. Her so-called family had sold her off, used her, imprisoned her, discarded her

Alpha Alar

Scarlett

sted deeper into his chest like a silver **knife**

Chapter 174

At last, he stood, gathering the entire folder under one arm. Caelum frowned slightly

“**Alpha.**” he said, “this file. it’s too cruel. Riley may not be ready to face it.”

Lucien’s voice was colder than the wind on the Frostfangs

+B Pearls

“She’s **endured** cruelty all her life without understanding why. If she must suffer, let her at **least** suffer knowing the truth.”

Then **he** strode out of the study, leaving Caelum behind.

For the first time in years, Lucien Duskgrave—war **hero**. Alpha heir, ruthless tactician—**hesitated**.

He stood before Riley’s embroidery chamber like a warrior before **battle**, palm hovering over the wooden door. He imagined her reaction, confusion, horror, heartbreak. Each possibility tore deeper into his core

Behind him, Caelum watched, eyes wide with disbelief. He had served under Lucien during the Rogue Purges, **had** seen him kill with a flick of his wrist. But now, for a woman. Lucien hesitated.

And Caelum understood why.

He’d read the same file.

The Ebonclaw Pack weren’t wolves—they were parasites.

Even in the blood-drenched world of werewolf clans, this kind of familial betrayal was rare. **Parents** stealing from their child, siblings conspiring against her. It was unspeakable.

Then, **without** warning, the door creaked open.

Riley stood in the **doorway**, framed by sunlight.

At first, confusion flitted across her face—but then her eyes locked onto **Caelum** and then dropped to the folder in Lucien’s

hand

Her breath caught.

“You found it” she rasped, voice hoarse from days of silence.

Lucien nodded slowly, his expression unreadable. “Everything. It’s all here. Do you... want to know?”

The weight of his words pressed against her chest.

Truth Or ignorance.

The folder felt like it might explode in his hands

Riley’s fingers twitched at her side. The collar of her simple dress fluttered with **her** shallow **breaths**. Despite all she’d

endured despite her **burning** curiosity—something in her hesitated. She could feel the **truth vibrating** off the folder like **dark** magic, ready to swallow **her** whole

Her voice cracked

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[718 words]

Chapter 175

Riley’s POV

I took a deep breath, forcing myself to stay calm.

“I want **to** know,” I said

My voice trembled, but there was no mistaking the determination behind it.

Lucien hesitated, just for a second, before handing me the thick stack of papers.

I reached out with slow fingers, feeling as if the weight of those pages could crush my chest.

+8 Pearls

The moment I flipped to the first page, my eyes scanned the printed words—and the blood drained from my face.

Each line carved open memories I had tried for years to suppress. Every vague suspicion, every pain that once lingered. without a name, **was** now written in black and **white**.

I had always believed I was kidnapped after birth. **Taken** by traffickers.

But the truth was so much worse.

It wasn't strangers who had stolen me.

It was my own father—Alpha Alaric of the Ebonclaw Pack

I wasn't lost. I was abandoned.

He left me in the Rogue—infested borderlands like discarded trash.

All those years I barely survived in **that** brutal, lawless **place**. it **was** by his design.

And Scarlett...

I **had** always thought **she was** an adopted child taken in to fill the void I left

But the records told a crueller tale..

Scarlett was no orphan, She was the child of Alpha Alaric and Dean Elira Blackthorn—the High Matron of Mooncrest First Hospital.

The same woman who had performed my mother's **prenatal** care.

The same **woman** who—after I was gone—appeared at **Luna** Zara's doorstep with a baby in her arms **and** a prophecy in her

mouth

“Thus child will mend the Luna's broken heart.”

They believed her

Zara raised Scarlett **as** her owl

All while I—her true **daughter**—was rotting in the dirt and shadows among Rogues

Alaric had arranged everything

astant out in make room for the child he had with his mistress

And then step by step, he helped Elira rise to power

I couldn't stop the snarl rising in my throat.

“Alaru I growled through clenched teeth

Chapter 175

Tears blurred my **vision**, hot and feral

I bit the inside of my cheek and forced myself to read **on**.

Elira was born with a degenerative kidney condition. Coincidentally, she was a perfect match with Zara

When **Zara** underwent a **cesarean** to deliver Riley, Alaric ordered Elira's surgery at the same time.

The surgeon—already bribed—removed one of Zara's kidneys during the operation and transplanted it into Elira.

My vision tunneled.

So **that** was why Zara always looked so frail after my “return” to the pack.

Why she never **had** energy. Why she always clutched her lower back.

And every time I clashed with Scarlett, she would say:

+B Pearls

“If I hadn't carried you, my body wouldn't be this broken. Can't you just get along with her? Must you fight her? Are you trying to kill me from **stress?**”

No. It wasn't childbirth **that** ruined her body.

It was the fact that her **kidney** was ripped out to save her husband's mistress,

And she punished me for it.

For **what?**

For being the one who was betrayed?

I let out a bitter laugh.

A deep, broken sound tore from my chest. It wasn't amusement. **It** was despair.

Was this **fate's** idea of justice?

A cruel kind of irony!

My laughter echoed through the room, **a** sound no wolf ever wanted to **make**—too close to a death—howl.

Lucien stood quietly, his usual icy composure replaced with **something** like grief.

He opened his mouth **as if to say** something, but **no** words came.

Caelum turned his head away, jaw clenched, unable to keep looking at me.

Slowly, **my** laughter died into a hollow sigh.

It carried twenty years of suffering.

You always told me I was a curse

A debt sent to punish you

But it wast

It was Alar

one who came to collect—your health, your pride, your

ider what you'll feel when you learn the truth.

Chapter 175

Your cherished adopted daughter is the product of your husband's infidelity.

That your own kidney keeps your husband's distress alive.

That your beloved mate **threw** away your child and crowned his bastard **as** your heir,

I closed my **eyes and** imagined her face when she found out.

The horror. The devastation.

And I won't lie—somewhere **in** my battered heart. I felt satisfaction.

I wiped away the tears streaming down my cheeks and looked **back** down at the documents.

The next **part** made my blood run cold.

I had always thought the Ebonclaw Pack's power was built by Alaric's ambition and strength.

But no

He was nothing more than a gilded parasite. A charming leech.

A low-born wolf who married up.

I **thought** he became ruthless only after his affair.

But the truth was clear now-

He had always been **this** monster.

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

[750 words]

Chapter 176

Riley's POV

I **had** always believed **Alpha** Alaric only turned cruel after falling for his mistress and fathering Scarlett.

That perhaps somewhere, before betrayal twisted his **soul**, there had been a shred of decency.

But the truth laid bare in those papers said otherwise.

Alaric **had** never **changed**.

He had always been a predator.

The kind of wolf who stalked his prey from the shadows, waiting for **the** perfect moment to strike.

+8 Pearls

Zara—my **mother, the** rightful Luna of the Ebonclaw Pack—had been born into power, the only daughter of a ruling bloodline. She **was** raised in light, wrapped in luxury, taught to command.

Alaric? He crawled out of a backwater den, born to a ghost of **a** woman who vanished after giving birth. He clawed **his** way into Ebonclaw University with nothing but ambition and cold hunger in his eyes.

And when he laid eyes on Zara.....

He didn't fall in love.

He found his golden ticket.

Their "love story was a farce. Every encounter, every glance, every whispered promise—staged. Planned.

He knew exactly what he was doing.

Zara's father—my grandfather—saw through him instantly. A lifetime in leadership had sharpened his instincts. He forbade the match outright.

But Zara had never known rejection. Never known wolves who lied with pretty words.

Blinded by what she thought was love, she rebelled.

She fell pregnant before even graduating from the Academy. With Alaric's child.

Cornered, my grandfather was forced to allow the union—but not without conditions.

Alaric would **marry** in and take the Ebonclaw name. A true mating bond, **but on** Ebonclaw terms.

Alaric smiled, bowed his head, and **agreed**.

But inside... he seethed.

He saw it **as humiliation**.

An **Alpha** forced to surrender **his** name.

He buried that rage deep, waiting

When Karl—my brother—was born, my grandfather demanded the boy take **Zara's** name. Not **Alaric's**.

That was **the final** insuli

But Alaric played the long game. He whispered poison into Zara's ears, sowing distance between her **and** her father

He made himself the victim, the **poor**, rejected mate

Zara believed him

Chapter 176

She even promised that their next child would bear his name.

And Alaric? He pretended to be moved.

But every breath he took **was soaked** in resentment.

That was when she came into the picture—Elira Blackthorn.

A healer. A prophet. A manipulator cloaked in moonlight.

She saw in Alaric what few dared to see—ambition that bordered on madness.

And he saw in her not just an accomplice.

But someone who could help him destroy everything the Ebonclaw name stood for.

Their affair wasn't a slip.

It was w

War.

He orchestrated Elira's pregnancy.

He wanted it.

He wanted to look Zara in the eyes while hiding a child that would one day replace hers.

When Zara bore me—his second daughter—he didn't hesitate.

He handed me over to the Rogues.

Not out of panic.

But calculation.

I was just a girl.

To him, that meant I had no value.

As

A son he might've kept

But a daughter?

He discarded me like broken **armor**.

Then, in the aftermath of his betrayal, Elira appeared at Zara's side—arms cradling a newborn—Scarlett.

Claiming the Moon Goddess had chosen **this** child to ease her heartache.

Zara, drowning in grief, accepted her.

And Alaric watched.

Watched **as** my mother nursed another wolf's daughter, believing her to be her own **salvation**.

Life revealed in it.

In the best

The cruelty didn't stop there.

When I was born. Zara **lost a kidney** during labor.

But that wasn't a medical complication.

It was an operation

+8 Pearls

351PM p p.

Chapter 176

The attending surgeon **had** been bought and paid for.

Under Alaric's order, my mother's kidney **was** carved from her body... and implanted into Elira.

Zara never knew

And still, she blamed me.

Every **word** she flung at me after I returned from the Rogues cut deeper now.

Finished

"If it weren't for you, I'd still be **strong**. You broke me. You and your constant defiance—why can't you be more like Scarlett?"

Scarlett

The daughter of the woman who stole her health.

The daughter my father raised as Ebonclaw's heir.

And the truth?

It wasn't just about Elira's illness.

Scarlett **had** inherited her mother's condition—renal failure.

And Alaric?

He needed a donor.

That **was** why he brought me back.

Not out of guilt

Not **to** reunite a family.

But to carve out my body, piece by piece.

A match for Zara meant a match for Scarlett.

He even had me imprisoned—framed for a crime I didn't commit.

Because no one mourns **a** convict.

No one asks questions when **a criminal** vanishes under the knife.

All those **years**....

He had been liquidating the Ebonclaw holdings.

Transferring assets to Elira's name.

Planning to take the money and flee the continent-

Leaving Zara **and** Kael to drown in debt.

He even ined to strike a final deal with Lucien Duskgrave—one **last** heist before disappearing for good.

But fate, as **always has** claws of her own.

The deal **collapsed**.

Lucien broke his legs.

And the wolf who thought he'd outplayed everyone **was** left crawling

Just like he'd once left me

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

[791 words]

Chapter 177

Riley's POV

The second page shattered something inside me.

Finished

Every **paragraph I read** was like a hammer, breaking through the last bits of denial I didn't even realize I was still clinging to.

Until that moment, I had thought **Alaric's** evil had a limit—that at the very least, **his** depravity had been born out of desperation, of a twisted sense of love or loyalty to that woman, Elira Blackthorn, and her daughter Scarlett.

But I had been so, so wrong.

The document didn't just tell a story—it exposed a monster.

Alaric hadn't just manipulated Zara, betrayed her, or used her.

He had destroyed her.

He orchestrated the death of her father—the former ruler of Ebonclaw—by **pushing him** from a construction tower and **staging it as** an accident.

He watched as **Zara**, the proud and beloved daughter of the most powerful bloodline in the territory, collapsed under the weight of her father's death and the loss of her newborn daughter—me.

He stole her kidney under the guise of a medical emergency and had it secretly transplanted into Elira's body, all to save a woman who was never supposed to exist in her world.

He allowed Kael—my brother—to be set up as the legal face of the Ebonclaw Holdings, only to later make him the fall guy when the company faced legal scrutiny.

He ensured Kael would rot in prison, **accused** of crimes that were never **his**.

And **as** for me?

I was the mistake Alaric buried.

The girl he discarded like a piece of trash at the borders of Rogue territory.

The daughter **whose** name he never wanted spoken **again**, whose very existence was erased, so his lie of a legacy could shine brighter.

My hands were **shaking violently** as I gripped the documents tighter, fingernails digging into my **palms** until I felt the warm sting **of** blood.

How could someone do this—get away with this—and still sleep soundly at night?

How could he, after **ruining so many lives**, after **killing, lying**, framing, stealing—**how** could he plan **to** escape to **another** country with his little counterfeit **family** and live in peace while we were all left in ruins?

No

No, I couldn't let that happen.

I drew in a slow, ragged breath, **trying** to steady the storm building inside my chest.

But the moment I turned to the next page, my breath caught—frozen mid—thought—**as a** single sentence exploded like thunder across my mind

“In the first month of Zara’s second **pregnancy**, her father administered a permanent sterilization compound to Alaric without his knowledge.

For a moment. I stared blankly at the words.

351PM P P

Chapter 177

Finished

I blinked.

Read them again.

And again

Then it hit me.

He was **sterile**.

He had been sterile before I was even born.

Which meant

Scarlett wasn’t his.

Neither was the boy Elira gave birth to years later.

His entire “family,” the legacy he had built his empire around, the children he treated as his pride and joy—none of them were his blood.

None of them.

The laughter that burst from my chest wasn’t human—it was **feral**, sharp—edged, cracked with years of rage and pain and, finally, justice.

He **had** spent decades building a throne of bones, a kingdom of lies, only to find out he had crowned **another** man’s children.

I leaned closer, eyes **wild, as I read the** next name that appeared **in the** document—and I froze again.

Caden Blackthorn.

Scarlett's driver.

Elira claimed that he was her cousin and begged Alabic to find a decent job for her cousin, so Caden became Scarlett's driver, **how** ridiculous.

The one who **had always** treated me like I was a parasite.

The one **who** looked **at me** with disdain, who never missed **an** opportunity to remind **me** I didn't belong.

And now I knew why.

He wasn't just a driver.

He was her father.

Not just by blood—but by intention.

The rest of the report unfolded like **a** tragedy written by the Moon Goddess herself.

Caden, whose real name **was** once Caden Wilson, had married Elira long before she stepped into Mooncrest's elite circles.

They were nobodies—**an** orphan girl with **medical dreams**, and a Omega-ranked young man with nothing but a loyal heart.

They loved each other fiercely, lived **simply**, and might have **lived** happily—**until** Elira's body began **to fail** her

Renal failure

No donor

No funds.

No hope.

Chapter 177

Finished

Until fate or perhaps something far darker—led Zara into her hospital **ward**, heavily **pregnant** with me, **accompanied** by **her** mate. Alaric

Elira had access to Zara’s medical profile.

She knew the match was perfect.

But it was Caden who proposed the solution.

Let Alaric **think** he was seducing her.

Let him believe he was the one in control.

Let her become his mistress, worm her way into his life, and buy herself more time.

Time to live.

Time to carry the child she was already secretly bearing—Caden’s child.

Scarlett.

The girl the Moon Goddess said would one day break Zara’s heart.

The girl Elira delivered, wrapped in lies, **and** handed over to a grieving **Luna** as a “miracle.”

Every line of the document burned into my memory like fire etched into bone.

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[777 words]

Chapter 178

Riley’s POV

Finished

From **that** moment on, everything unfolded just the way they had planned—like a spell perfectly cast, dark, twisted, and horrifyingly seamless.

Elira Blackthorn survived the transplant.

And not only that—her daughter, Scarlett, the child she **had** with Caden Blackthorn, was brought into the Ebonclaw household by Alaric himself, right under Zara’s broken heart and blind trust.

Caden, unable to bear being apart from the daughter he and Elira had created in secret, changed his surname to Blackthorn, claiming to be Elira’s younger brother.

Elira, ever the skilled manipulator, introduced him to **Alaric** with a perfect mix of motherly concern and calculated charm.

“I just worry so much about Scarlett,” she **had** said, her voice trembling with practiced fear. “She’s still so young. I’m afraid she’ll be mistreated in this **unfamiliar** home. My **brother**, Caden, has always been protective **of** her. If he could work for the Ebonclaw estate, maybe as her driver it would give me peace of mind.”

And Alaric, the so-called Alpha, nodded without **hesitation**, never questioning the story, never seeing the truth.

And just like that, **Caden** was **brought** into the pack.

Every day, he picked up and dropped **off** Scarlett from the Halston Academy,

Every **day**, he stood at **Elira’s** side.

Every day, he played the role of the devoted uncle, the ever-loyal driver.

But the truth was—they were a family.

A true family.

And they were living happily under the roof of the very woman they had all helped destroy.

Elira’s health **stabilized**, her career soared, and her place by Alaric’s side was secured.

And not long after, she got pregnant **again—this time** with a boy.

That child is now twenty, studying overseas under a new **name**, protected **and pampered, receiving** millions in monthly “allowance from the man who still believed **him** to be **his** only biological son.

Alaric had **no** idea **that** the boy bore no trace of his blood

That none of the children he **raised as his** heirs **were his** own

That the woman he thought he'd conquered had belonged to another **man** all along.

And worst of

The only **five** minutes he ever **had** to offer her in bed—Elira had mocked behind his **back** for years.

The longer I stared at the documents, the more twisted the story became

But I couldn't look away

The truth was like blood—I needed to see every drop spilled, every lie uncovered

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Chapter 178

Alaric, you thought you had won.

That you **had** outplayed Zara, Kael, **and** me.

That you had rewritten your place in this pack's history with lies, betrayal, and cruelty.

But look at you now,

Your one and only son sits rotting in a prison cell, framed by your **own** hand,

All the wealth you siphoned off over the years—gone. Hidden under the name of a

Your legs, broken. Your **name**, disgraced.

a woman who never

loved

you.

Finished

You deserve it.

You deserve every second of your downfall.

The satisfaction that surged in my chest was so intense it bordered on euphoria.

One moment, I laughed—uncontrollably, breathlessly—relishing the image of Alaric being reduced to a pathetic, humiliated. shell of a man.

But then the laughter twisted, tangled with pain.

A tightness gripped my heart, and I remembered everything Zara had lost—her mate, her father, her daughters.

I remembered the coldness of the Rogue caves, the hunger, the humiliation.

The way Scarlett used to **smirk when the** guards kicked me **down**, the way Elira's hand lingered too **long** on **Alaric's** shoulder.

Tears blurred my vision. My knees buckled.

I would have hit the **floor** if not for someone catching me.

Familiar hands

Steady, warm, and strong

Hooked up

Lucien

His deep green eyes were filled with concern, **the** kind of w

“Tmn fine.” I whispered, forcing a **shaky** smile.

I wasn't

But I would I

Because now I had the truth

And the truth was a weapon

that made my throat tighten.

Once I steadied myself, I met Lucien's gaze again, this time with a spark of cold resolve

I want to go to the infirmary” I said quietly. “I want to see Zara

He didn't ask why. He didn't need to

be to let her

Chapter 178

The full truth

About Scarlett. About Alaric. About everything.

Let her taste the betrayal.

Let her look into her mirror and see the ghosts of every wrong she ever overlooked.

Lucien opened his mouth to speak, but just then, his comm crystal pulsed to life—a message from the Council

The Eastern Borderlands Expansion Plan was being reviewed again.

They needed him. Urgently

I could see the apology in his eyes before he even said a word.

"I can't go with you," he muttered, **jaw** clenched. "They want me in the council tower now."

"I'll be fine." I said, my voice calmer now.

He turned to Caelum—who had remained quiet until now, **leaning** against the wall like a silent sentinel.

"Caelum." Lucien ordered, from this moment forward, you're her shadow. You **don't** let her out of your sight."

Caelum didn't even flinch.

He simply nodded.

And with that, the tides turned

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

[798 words]

Chapter 179

Third Person's POV

On her way to the Mooncrest Medical Center, Riley found herself unable to calm down.

Finished

Images of Zara's face flashed repeatedly in her mind—how would the proud Luna of the Ebonclaw Pack react when faced with the truth? The woman who once ruled over pack lands with grace and power, who believed she was blessed by the Moon Goddess herself, would finally see that she had been nothing more than a puppet in Alabic's meticulously crafted **play**.

Riley had come here not just to confront the past, but to make sure Zara understood every lie she had swallowed and every betrayal she had endured. She wanted Zara to feel the same helplessness and **pain** she once did—the agony of trust torn apart by deception.

When she arrived at the hospital, Riley took a deep breath and steadied her emotions. Her footsteps were firm and sharp as she strode toward Zara's room, the corridor echoing with the sound of her determination.

She pushed open the door, and what met her eyes was a far cry from the powerful Luna of the past.

Zara, the once regal matron always dressed in elegance, now looked like a wilted bloom—pale, hollow-eyed, **and** stripped of her commanding presence. Her legs were casted, and her **aura** dimmed. The Luna **had** been reduced to a fragile, caged patient.

She had already learned from her **assistant** that both **Scarlett** and Kael—**her** “beloved **daughter** and heir—had been imprisoned. The news had left her in a frenzy, **but** her injuries made her powerless, **unable** to leave her room, her **frustration**. mounting like a storm behind her ribs.

And then Riley entered

The moment Zara's eyes met Riley's, **a** blaze of hatred ignited. To her, the girl standing before her was the root of it all. Her shattered legs, her children in **jail**, her crumbling name—everything was Riley's fault.

Zara thrashed in her bed, the fury in her bones driving her like wildfire. “You little wretch!” she screamed **hoarsely**, “I should **have** let the Rogues tear you apart when

they had the chance! If anything happens to Scarlett or Maddox, I'll drag you to hell myself?"

But Riley, used to such venom, **didn't** flinch. Her expression was blank, her golden eyes **calm and unreadable**, like the **still** surface of a lake concealing the darkness beneath. She stood at a distance, arms folded, letting Zara **exhaust** herself

For nearly an hour, Zara raged, cursed, **and** sobbed. But Riley remained still, an unmoving statue, letting her drown in her own bitterness.

At last, Zara collapsed against the bed, gasping for **breath**, her strength **sapped**

Only then did **Riley** speak, her voice soft, mocking

"**Luna Zara**" she said coolly. "I **brought something** interesting Would you care to **take** a look?"

With **that she laid** a **thick file** on the edge of the **hospital** bed.

Zara snatched at it with trembling hands, intending **to shred** it **apart** without reading a word.

But Riley's voice stopped her "Are you sure **you** don't want to see what secrets your perfect little family's been hiding all these years!

Zara's eyes narrowed suspicion flickering in the depths of her **pain**. Against her better judgment, she **glanced** down—and the moment her eyes skimmed the **first** page, her face insisted in disbelief

"No, that's a lie she shrieked fingering the papers from her Lap "You forged this, you venomous brat! You're trying to

Her denial was loud violent—but the tears rolling **down** her **cheeks** told another story. Her body trembled, as if **struck** by

Chapter 179

lightning

"He wouldn't do this to me

me... He said he loved me... Alabie wouldn't he couldn't_"

But the documents in her lap didn't lie.

Finished

She had always believed her life was flawless—her mate loyal, her children her pride, her marriage blessed. But now, the truth loomed like a jagged moon above her: Alabic had never been hers.

He had **never** loved her.

Everything had been orchestrated—the birth of Riley, the sudden death of her father, the **convenient** way **Alabic** claimed the Ebonclaw fortune after Zara’s fall.

Even Scarlett, the girl she’d raised and adored, wasn’t hers by blood. She was the child of **Elira** Blackthorn—the director of Mooncrest Hospital—and Alabic. Sent **to** Zara by a so-called Seer, who claimed the child would heal her shattered **heart**.

What a cruel prophecy. What a devastating lie.

Every piece fell into place now. Riley’s disappearance. Her father’s mysterious death just days after her birth. The way Alabic seized control of the pack and erased every trace of Zara’s power, all while Zara poured her soul into raising someone else’s child.

Through it all, Zara had clung to her faith in Alabic, even convincing herself that motherhood could erase the cracks **forming** around her heart.

Now, her world had caved in.

Zara’s once proud eyes clouded with disbelief. She stared at **Riley**, who stood like like a shadow from the past, unmoved by the chaos.

And Riley?

Riley had waited a long time for **this**.

This was only the beginning.

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[904 words]

Chapter 180

Third Person's POV

But the truth was far more brutal than Zara ever imagined.

Finished

During her cesarean section years ago, **Alabic** had bribed the healer—secretly removing one of her kidneys without her knowledge.

And all these years, Zara had poured unconditional love into Scarlett, her supposed **adopted** daughter. She **had** even forced Riley, her true-born daughter, to take the fall for a **crime** she never committed—all so Scarlett could stay safe and untouched. Riley had suffered alone in the dungeons of Mooncrest for five long years, branded a criminal, tortured by both fate and family.

Now, she finally knew—Scarlett wasn't an orphaned pup the Moon Goddess had gifted her in her grief. She was Alabic's illegitimate child, born of his secret affair with the very **she**—wolf who'd stolen everything from Riley.

Each revelation struck Zara like a hammer to the chest, crushing her until she could hardly breathe. Her world collapsed in an instant. The hospital room blurred before her eyes as despair and helplessness surged over her like a tidal wave.

Her thoughts spiraled back to Riley—her **real** daughter, the one she had discarded. After returning to the Ebonclaw Pack, Riley had been treated like an intruder, a stain on the family name. She had endured scorn, humiliation, and **constant**

forment.

While Alabic's bastard daughter was cradled in luxury, her own daughter had been left to bleed—abandoned, humiliated, and betrayed.

Were Alabic and that woman—Blackthorn—smirking all these years, proud of their manipulation?

“Aaah!” Zara suddenly clutched her head and screamed.

Alabic... How could you be **so** heartless?

Everything she had done to Riley now rebounded on her, each act of cruelty becoming **a blade** turned inward.

Shame. Regret. Remorse. They wrapped **around** her **throat** like **a** noose.

It **took** a long while before she could lift her tear-streaked face **and** meet Riley's eyes. Despair filled her gaze, and for the first time, so did pain and guilt.

"I don't believe it," Zara **croaked**, her voice **trembling**. "You forged this, didn't **you**? You hate **that** we **loved** Scarlett more than **you** so you're taking revenge. **That's** it. That has to be it"

Her head **shook** violently as if trying to fling the truth away. Her golden hair whipped about, and her eyes stared desperately at Riley's face, looking for a crack, a flicker of falsehood

But all she found was indifference—Riley's expression **was as** calm **and** cold as a frozen **lake**, not even a ripple of emotion in

She was right about one thing

Riley was here for revenge

That's why Riley had deliberately hidden the truth about Scarlett's parentage She wanted Zara to **suffer** wanted her to feel the pain of raising someone else's child with love and pride while discarding her own blood **like** trash

She would not allow Zara the satisfaction of knowing **Alabic** had been used **and played** for a fool by Blackthorn and her lover. No lu Kiley i eyes those who had hurt her dulu deserve **truth**. They deserved torment

Aud night now, Zara was unraveling

The man she mated with had stolen her **kidney**. The father who raised her had died by Alabic's claws. Her daughter had been turned into a scapegoat and sent to prison—only to **have** her own organs harvested to **save** the hte of Alabic's mistress's chuld.

Chapter 180

Finished

"**Alabic, how** could you do this to me!" Zara cried, her voice breaking into a jagged wail that pierced the silence like a dying. wolf's howl

It **was** a cry of agony, soaked in betrayal and anguish.

Her heart was being shredded, piece by **piece**, every truth tearing through what little strength she had left.

Riley watched from afar. She felt a flicker of satisfaction, but it quickly faded into a familiar emptiness.

There was no joy in this victory—only sorrow.

Sorrow for **having** a mother like **Zara**.

Zara, the once—revered Alpha’s daughter, **had** been reduced to a deluded, love—blind **woman**—one who had fallen prey to a lowborn manipulator like **Alabic**, a wolf who wore charm like a mask and built empires atop the corpses of others

If she had been born into an ordinary family—just one free of power, pride, and schemes—perhaps her life wouldn’t **have** ended in such ruin.

Riley no longer wanted to look at her.

She turned **to** leave.

But Zara, in a frenzy, reached out and grabbed her wrist with all the strength she had left, tears pouring down her face.

“Riley—don’t go! Please! You’re all I have now. I was wrong—I know I was wrong! Please forgive me...”

Her voice cracked with every word, her entire body trembling with desperation.

But Riley’s face remained unchanged—cold and unyielding.

“Forgive me. She’d heard it **too many** times. The words had long lost their weight

Her gaze dropped to Zara, and for the first time, there **was** no pity in her eyes—only clarity.

“Luna Zara,” she said, voice calm as steel, “you did nothing wrong. The mistake **was** mine—believing in you, believing in all of

you

“But don’t worry. I’ve seen your true faces. I’ll never believe **again**.”

“You don’t have to worry. **Even** if I die out there **alone**, I won’t come crawling back. I’ve already returned the **favor** of **giving** me life—with blood. From now on, we are nothing to each other.”

She yanked her wrist free and walked toward the door without **looking** back,

“No—Riley, please! Please, just one more chance!” **Zara’s** scream tore **through** the room.

She ignored her **injury**, tried to **crawl** out of bed, tried to chase after her daughter—but it was too late.

Deep down, she knew it.

If Haley walked out now there would be **no** more second chances

Their bond as mother and daughter had been severed.

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[836 words]

Chapter 181

Finished

Third Person's POV

Zara's tears streamed uncontrollably down her cheeks, falling in heavy drops onto the hospital sheets, blooming into dark stains like blood.

Desperate, she struggled wildly and—with a loud thud—tumbled from the hospital bed onto the cold floor.

But she didn't feel a thing.

She lay sprawled on the ground in utter disarray, her once-proud form crumpled, eyes locked onto Riley's retreating figure, her gaze brimming with desperate hope—hoping, praying, that Riley might turn back, might glance at her with even the smallest flicker of care.

But she didn't.

Riley didn't stop walking. She didn't even pause at the sound of the fall.

And even if she had heard it, she wouldn't have looked back.

When Riley's silhouette vanished at the threshold of the room, Zara's pupils dilated in horror. Her face twisted in **fear** and despair.

"No, don't go-!"

"Come back—Riley, come back! Please, I'm begging you-!"

Zara lay there on the floor, trembling violently, her body wracked with sobs.

Her tears fell like a dam broken. Her hands stretched forward, clawing at the air in futility, **as** if she could drag Riley back just by willing it hard enough.

"Riley! Riley-!" she screamed hoarsely, each cry soaked in heartbreak and crushing regret. **Her** voice **grew** ragged and sharp, echoing painfully in the sterile room. But there was no answer. No one came.

Riley was gone.

Out in the corridor, Riley walked forward step by steady step, her pace unwavering, her mind resolute.

But when she reached the corner of the hall, she suddenly halted.

Caelum Knox stopped behind her, **a** flicker of confusion in his sharp amber eyes. "Miss Riley, **is** something **wrong**?"

Riley stood at the perfect vantage point—just ahead, she could see **Alabic's** hospital room.

Her eyes narrowed slightly. A glint of icy cunning flashed in her gaze, like **a** silver blade catching the moonlight. Then her lips curled into a smile—subtle, knowing, and darkly amused.

She murmured, "Take a guess. What do you think the Zara will do next?"

Caelum Knox thought for a moment before answering calmly, "She'll likely **go** confront Alabic."

Riley chuckled softly. There was no warmth in that sound.

"I thought the same. And a show like that... how could I possibly miss it after coming all this way?"

There was a flicker of surprise in Caelum Knox's eyes.

He'd known Riley for just over a month. In that time, she had always **struck** him **as** composed and graceful. But in this moment—calculated merciless in her justice—she saw another side of her A side forged in fire and betrayal

He couldn't help but feel a quiet awe. Beneath her seemingly gentle exterior **was** a spine of steel Anyone who had once underestimated this she-wolf would pay dearly for it.

3:52 PM P P .

Chapter 181

And sure enough, not long after, they saw Zara being wheeled with urgency straight into Alabic's room.

Riley's eyes gleamed. Like a hunter catching the scent of prey, she picked up her pace and followed swiftly behind.

Caelum Knox trailed closely, ever-vigilant.

Inside the hospital room, Alabic's expression was as dark as storm clouds over the ridge.

Finished

Moments earlier, he had received grim news from his secretary—news that had shattered what little peace he had left.

The Ebonclaw estate, once the most powerful in the Southern Territories, had collapsed overnight.

Kael—his heir, his son—was sitting in a prison cell, charged with embezzlement, tax fraud, and illegal pack fund transfers.

And Scarlett, his precious daughter, had been arrested by the Lycan Tribunal for robbery.

The fall of the Ebonclaw fortune, he could tolerate. That was a part of his calculated plan—he'd placed Kael as the legal owner of their shady operations years ago, just in case things turned sour. That was the cost of shielding himself.

But Scarlett?

Scarlett getting locked up was unacceptable.

His darling girl, the only one who reminded him of his youth and his ambition—sitting behind silver bars like a common rogue?

“Damn that girl—Riley!” he seethed, bloodshot eyes gleaming with fury. “If I still had my legs, I’d drag her back myself!”

As he furiously mulled over how to bail Scarlett out, the door burst open.

Zara stormed in, seated in her wheelchair, her eyes red and wild.

Alabic froze for a moment, surprised by her sudden appearance.

But then his expression shifted—calculating, sly. A new idea sparked in his scheming mind.

If he wanted to save Scarlett, it would take gold. Lots of it.

The embroidery Scarlett destroyed was valued at over twenty million. They’d have to pay every coin of it to the Lunar Trade Guild.

But money alone wasn’t enough.

With someone like Lucien involved—Riley’s future mate and a judge of the High Lycan Tribunal—getting Scarlett out would require heavy bribes, hush money, and political favors.

It would cost at least forty or fifty million.

Technically, he still had that kind of wealth. Years ago, he’d already funneled every coin of the Ebonclaw fortune into accounts under Blackthorn’s name.

But that money was meant for their future abroad—for new identities, lavish estates, endless pleasure.

To waste it now, just to protect the illegitimate daughter of a dead empire?

His gut churned with rage at the thought.

Not **because** of the risk.

But because he hated spending money when he wasn’t the one holding the leash.

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

[820 words]

Chapter 182

Finished

Third Person's POV

So it was no surprise that Alabic Ebonclaw's eyes, gleaming with greed, locked onto Zara like a starving wolf eyeing prey.

All the assets he had managed to smuggle out—the gold, the artifacts, the pack holdings—were either under his own name or that of the Ebonclaw estate. But Zara's personal holdings? He hadn't touched a single silver coin of them.

She still held shares in the Council-regulated Northern Territories Trading Syndicate, not to mention a hidden vault of pure moonstone and the ancient Ebonclaw manor—officially registered under her name.

Selling those alone would easily raise the five million he needed to buy Scarlett's way out of the Lycan Tribunal's clutches.

What a perfect opportunity.

He would save his precious daughter and bleed that cold-hearted woman dry in the process. Let her know what it felt like be used and discarded—just as she had done to his pride years ago.

Alabic's expression darkened further as he recalled his humiliation.

to

He had once been a brilliant young warrior—valedictorian of the Ebonclaw Academy, top of his class in strategy and combat, destined to ascend through the ranks of the High Court and carve his name into the history of the packs.

But that dream was shattered when the elder of his pack had demanded he marry into the Ebonclaws. Not as a free Alpha, but as a consort. A glorified servant.

A male Luna.

The shame of it still burned.

If Zara had truly loved him, she would have offered herself with dignity and gifted the Ebonclaws her lands, her title. But instead, she had demanded he bend his knee. Submit.

He could never forgive that.

And that was why he'd done what he had to do—why he had ensured the old Ebonclaw ruler died suddenly, “accidentally.” It was the only way to break the chains.

His eyes flickered with venomous satisfaction.

For years, he had tolerated Zara, played the dutiful husband. He'd even endured her arrogance,

But now that Scarlett was in danger, it **was** time she repaid him—for everything.

He schooled his features into a pained grimace, let his shoulders sag just so, and when Zara entered the room, he pitched his voice low and strained, full of grief and helplessness.

“My love you're finally here.”

In the past. Zara would have rushed to his side the moment she saw his weary eyes. She'd always been weak to his act

Today, she didn't move.

She stood there gripping a few sheets of parchment—documents Riley had delivered earlier—and her eyes were cold. Frigid. Like the heart of a dead glacier.

Alabic frowned, confused by her silence, thinking her mood sour from her injury.

He sighed dramatically and continued, “Scarlett's been arrested. By the Tribunal”

He rubbed his temples as though the weight of the world rested there. “Zara, our daughter can't survive in a dungeon like that She's never even been outside the manor without an escort. Can you imagine her in a cell? With rogues? With comunals?”

3:52 PM P P .

Chapter 182

He shook his head, feigning anguish.

Zara's eyes burned red. But it wasn't sorrow.

It was fury.

Scarlett couldn't handle prison?

And Riley could?

She swallowed the bile rising in her throat. “And what,” she asked coldly, “do you intend to do to save Scarlett?”

Finished

Alabic stiffened. There was something off in her tone—too formal, too detached. She never called their daughter “Scarlett.” She used to say “our pup.”

Now she said her name like she was a stranger.

He narrowed his eyes.

The bitch is getting bold.

Let her. Once he wrung her dry of her holdings, she’d be nothing. Just a broken old she-wolf with no title, no children, no wealth, and no allies. When that day came, he’d toss her to the rogues. Let them do as they pleased.

He nearly laughed at the thought—Zara, former Luna of Ebonclaw, reduced to a gutter plaything.

Instead, he kept his face smooth, voice soft.

have your holdings. A few shares in the trade guilds, your vault... and that old manor from your father.”

“Zara,” he began, “the Ebonclaw accounts have been frozen. Lucien Duskgrave’s dogs made sure of that. But winter mirruzufferies Muer

you still

He took a deep breath, as though the words pained him. “We could sell those. Gather what we can. Use it to buy Scarlett’s freedom.”

He smiled faintly, playing the concerned father to perfection. “Money comes and goes. But our family—us, together—that’s worth everything.”

He thought his performance flawless.

But the greed in his eyes betrayed him. His hunger was visible in every twitch of his **jaw**, every flicker in his gaze.

And Zara saw it all.

Saw through him like she had finally removed the veil from her eyes.

She understood now.

Alaric wasn't asking. He **was** planning to strip her of everything and then toss her away like she never mattered.

There was no family in his words.

No love

Only profit.

Only schemes.

She tightened her grip on the papers in her hand, knuckles white.

She'd thought losing her daughter once was the worst pain in the world.

She had been wrong

It was realizing that the wolf she had loved, trusted, and handed her entire life to had never loved her back.

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[829 words]

Chapter 183

Finished

Third Person's POV

The moment Zara realized the full extent of Alaric's deception, her rage erupted like a volcano long kept dormant.

Had she still been in the dark, she might've agreed to his plan without question. Might've foolishly believed his concern for family. But now that the veil had been torn away—now that she knew he had schemed against her for years, drained her trust, her love, her blood—and now intended to use her wealth to rescue the bastard child he'd made with his mistress?

Zara's fury exploded.

Her face flushed crimson, eyes burning like wildfire, her aura igniting with the raw, untamed energy of a mother wolf pushed beyond the brink. She looked every bit the Luna she once was—powerful, wrathful, and ready to kill.

With a sharp thrust, she rolled her wheelchair forward and slammed to a stop right before Alaric.

Without a word of warning, she raised her arm and struck him hard across the face.

The sound of the slap echoed in the cold, sterile room like a whip crack.

2

”

“You bastard!” Zara screamed, her voice raw, her words trembling with grief and betrayal. “You lied to me for decades! You took my father from me, had my son imprisoned, destroyed my daughter’s life—and you even stole one of my kidneys! Now you want me to pay for the freedom of the brat you made with your mistress? You sick, vile mutt! I should rip your throat out right now!”

Her voice hit the walls like lightning, and her arms flailed, claws bared like a she-wolf gone feral. The pain, the betrayal, the years of silence—all of it erupted in a torrent of violence.

The hospital lights above flickered stark and pale. Zara’s once-groomed hair now fell in wild tangles. Her eyes were bloodshot, wide, feral—no longer the gentle Luna, but a grieving mother, a betrayed mate, and a woman on the edge.

“You soulless dog!” she shrieked. “You brought ruin to everything we built. You tore our family apart!”

She launched herself forward, arms like talons, trying to rake his face open.

Alaric winced as her nails dug deep, sharp lines of blood appearing across his cheeks. He grabbed her wrists, but even in a wheelchair, Zara fought like a rabid alpha. Her strength shocked him—her madness terrified him.

“Zara, have you lost your mind?!” Alaric bellowed, staggering back.

Zara laughed—a shrill, broken sound that didn’t resemble laughter at all. “Yes! Yes, I’ve lost my mind!” she screamed, her voice trembling with raw hatred. “You stole everything from me! My family, my body, my soul! And now you dare to ask what’s wrong with me?!”

Alaric froze for a moment. There was something in her eyes he hadn't seen before.

Awareness.

She knew.

Somehow, she had found out the truth about the **past**—the secrets he thought buried, the blood he thought washed clean. But quickly, he composed himself, forcing confusion into his features.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he said smoothly. "You're not making any sense."

That did it

Zara's rage soared past the breaking point.

With trembling hands, she pulled a bundle of documents from her lap and hurled them in his **face**.

"This!" she spat. "This is what I'm talking about You bastard—read it! You really thought I'd never find out?"

3.53 PM P P •

Chapter 183

Finished

Alaric caught the papers instinctively and glanced down. As his eyes scanned the words—bank transfers, medical records, forged signatures—his face drained of color.

He staggered backward like a man struck by lightning.

All his careful lies.

All his buried sins.

All of it was there, spelled out in black and white. Undeniable. Inescapable.

Zara stared at him with eyes full of heartbreak and disgust.

Thirty years. She had given him her youth, her love, her loyalty. She had forgiven him again and again, even when their daughter disappeared under suspicious circumstances. Even when Kael was sentenced for crimes she now suspected he never committed. Even when her health declined mysteriously after childbirth.

She had stayed silent.

Stayed loyal.

But this—this **was** the end.

“You—” Her voice cracked. “You never intended to protect me. You never loved me.”

Then her voice dropped into **a** whisper, **so** soft it sounded like the last dying flicker of hope.

“So that’s why... all these years, you never marked me.”

Her voice broke on the last word.

“You said it wasn’t the right time, that you were waiting. You said it was because we were already mated in spirit. But it was all lies, wasn’t it? I wasn’t worthy enough. I was just... convenient.”

Alaric didn’t answer.

He couldn’t.

Because it **was** true.

Zara’s tears spilled freely now, but there was no weakness in them—only fury. Her sorrow was a storm. And he **was** standing in **its** eye.

“Beast!” she screamed.

Like a wild she-wolf, she lunged again, claws ripping down his throat and neck, tearing open the skin. Blood poured from his wounds, seeping into the collar of his hospital gown.

“You took my father! You took my son! You took my daughter!”

Lach ory came with a fresh blow, her hands leaving long, red trails down his flesh. Her strength came from agony, and there was no stopping her now.

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[981 words]

Chapter 184

Third Person's POV

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Zara's voice trembled with a grief so deep it cracked through her soul.

Finished

"What did I ever do to deserve this?" she cried hoarsely. "Thirty years, Alaric. Thirty years of being your mate—did it mean nothing to you?"

Alaric Vale could barely shield himself from her fury. His legs, still broken and weak from the savage beating he had received days ago from Duke, hadn't yet healed.

That was the curse of it.

Ever since the fight with Duke, Alaric had been unable to shift into his wolf. Something had snapped inside him that night— not just bones, but the fragile tether to his beast. Whether it was the brutal force of the injuries, a backlash from a spell cast during the scuffle, or a sign that his wolf had begun rejecting him after years of betrayal and moral rot—he did not know. All he knew was that when he reached inward now, there was only silence. His healing had slowed to a crawl, no better than

human's.

For a werewolf who once wielded power with impunity, it was a terrifying weakness.

a

Now, facing a storm of rage from the mate he had betrayed beyond redemption, he could only flail, helpless and cornered.

"Zara, enough!" he choked out, arms waving clumsily in the air as her nails tore across his face.

But she didn't stop.

The fire in her eyes had become a consuming inferno.

She leapt forward, her fingers clamping around his throat like steel traps.

“You don’t get to live after what you’ve done! You’re a monster!” Zara’s entire frame shook with hatred. Her claws dug in deeper, her eyes glowing with feral energy, no longer the mate he once controlled—but a mother wolf driven by vengeance.

Alaric gasped, his eyes rolling back, lips turning blue. His tongue lolled from his mouth as his arms thrashed in the air. Oxygen fled his body with every second she held him, and panic twisted his body like a dying animal.

Outside the hospital room, Riley stood silently, watching the unfolding chaos through the glass.

She had never seen her mother like this.

She had assumed Zara, broken **as** she was, would choose **silence**, or retreat. That **she** would weep behind closed doors, too proud to cause a scene.

But now she understood.

There was no forgiveness in **Zara** anymore—only righteous fury.

Riley’s lips curled in a cold smile. Only when the blade cut your own flesh did you understand pain. And now, finally, Zara understood.

Inside, Zara’s face twisted in anguish. Her hands shook, but her grip remained iron—strong around Alaric’s throat.

Her world had crumbled into ruin.

She had never cared for money—she had always had plenty. But what she treasured most had been loyalty, love, her family.

And Alaric had destroyed all of it:

Her father? Poisoned by Alaric

Her son Kael? Framed and locked away, the key thrown into the abyss.

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Her daughter Riley? Abandoned, unloved, replaced by a child not her own.

Her own body? Harvested—violated—her kidney stolen, for Alaric’s bastard.

Zara’s screams tore through the sterile air as she squeezed harder.

Alaric's vision darkened. His body convulsed violently, and he groped blindly around the nightstand—desperate for something, anything.

His fingers brushed metal.

A fruit knife.

Driven by primal survival, he didn't think. He just plunged the blade forward.

A wet, sickening shhk filled the air.

Zara's scream pierced the room like shattered glass.

Her body flung backward as pain exploded from her left eye. Blood sprayed across Alaric's face, hot and thick.

The knife had pierced her face—her eye.

Finished

She fell hard to the floor, writhing in agony, her cries echoing like the last howls of a dying wolf. Blood pooled beneath her, her hands clutching her face as her body twisted uncontrollably.

Alaric gasped for air, greedily pulling breath into his burning lungs. His chest rose and fell in ragged jerks as he blinked the blood out of his own **eyes**.

When he looked down at Zara, his breath caught in his throat.

Her left eye was gone.

The blade still jutted from the socket, and blood streamed through her fingers, down her arms, staining her hospital gown.

She writhed, screeched, pleaded in pain—a sight that would haunt any decent man.

But Alaric Vale?

He felt only relief.

And soon, calculation.

He staggered back from the bed, muttering, "It—it wasn't my fault. She attacked me. This is... this **is** self-**defense**."

His voice trembled, but the panic in his **eyes** had begun to fade.

He looked down at the woman he had spent three decades pretending to love. Now lying in a pool of her own blood. And yet, in his heart, there **was** no sorrow. No regret. Only cold, twisted clarity.

After all, they were still legally mated.

This? This would be brushed off as domestic violence. A tragic misunderstanding. He'd get a slap on the wrist, maybe a lecture from the Elders—then walk free,

He would be **fine**.

And Zara?

She was done.

He wiped the blood from his mouth and opened his communication stone.

“Hello?” he said as the call connected. “Elira—come to **my** room Now”

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His voice was casual, almost bored.

Finished

“That bitch Zara found out about us,” he continued, lips curled in disgust. “She tried to kill me. I stabbed her in the eye. Bring someone to drag her out—I don't want to see her. Filthy thing.”

The words spilled out of his mouth without a pause.

But across the room, Zara heard every word.

Writhing on the floor, blinded on one side, she glared up at him, the only eye she had left burning with a hatred so potent it made the air feel colder.

Her voice was barely a whisper, but it carried the weight of a curse.

“Alaric Vale... you will die in agony.”

Alaric laughed.

He threw his head back and howled with cruelty, the sound shrill, inhuman. His bloodied face twisted in something resembling glee.

“Die?” he sneered: “Bitch, if it weren’t for your shares in the pack council and what little name you still have, you think I’d have let you live this long?”

He spat on the ground, blood mingling with saliva.

“You were just a means to an end.”

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[963 words]

Chapter 185

Finished

Third Person’s POV

Alaric’s lips twisted into a grotesque grin, blood still streaked across his face like war paint. His yellowed teeth showed as he let out a low chuckle, the corners of his mouth curling like a serpent slithering through shadows.

“I slept beside you for thirty years, and every single night was a curse,” he spat, eyes gleaming with cruelty as he looked down at the one-eyed she-wolf crumpled on the floor. “Especially when we mated—Moon above, you were like a dead fish. Cold. Unresponsive. Disgusting.”

His voice grew louder, crueler, echoing in the sterile room like venom.

“You think you could compare to Elira?” he sneered, shaking his head smugly, as if mocking Zara with every syllable. “You’re not even worthy of licking her paws.”

“I never loved you,” he declared without hesitation. “If your father hadn’t been the Alpha of Ebonclaw, if you hadn’t come with a pack alliance and shares—ha! I wouldn’t have spared you a second glance.”

“You were stupid, Zara. And I took advantage of it. Thanks to your trust, I now own what’s left of the Ebonclaw seat. Once I’m discharged, I’ll leave this cursed land with the she-wolf I truly love and my children—our real children. What can you possibly do to stop me?”

He laughed wildly, tossing his head back like an unhinged beast. The blood on his face seemed to crawl, twisting down his cheeks like parasitic leeches. The veins bulged at his temples, mirroring his glee. The more he spoke, the deeper his claws drove into Zara’s shattered heart.

Every word slashed at her soul like silvered blades. And then... something in her broke.

Her body, wracked with pain just moments ago, suddenly surged with unnatural strength. Adrenaline—no, rage—pulsed through her like wildfire.

She stopped feeling the searing agony in her inangled eye. The throbbing in her ruined legs vanished.

All she felt now was vengeance.

Her breath rasped through gritted teeth. Her chest rose and fell like a beast ready to charge. Her bloodied hands slammed into the ground, veins bulging beneath pale, bruised skin as she forced herself upright.

Alaric's laughter faltered.

He blinked. Once. **Twice.**

And then he saw her.

Zara stood, looming blood pouring down her face. Her once-gentle features were contorted in a mask of pure fury, her **jaw** clenched so tightly her teeth cracked audibly. Her one remaining eye **was** ablaze—wild, feral, unforgiving

She looked like something risen from the underworld. And Alaric. finally felt **fear**.

"You monster," she rasped, voice hoarse, cracking under the weight of hate. "I'll kill you

She launched herself at **him** with frightening speed. He barely had time to scream before her claws latched onto the knife still wet with her blood

With strength only a mother stripped of everything could summon, she plunged the blade downward

A scream tore from Alaric's throat—shrill, high-pitched, animalistic.

The blade but **its mark**

His howl echoed through the room as his groan exploded in crimson.

Zara stabbed again. And again.

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The knife rose and fell like the swing of judgment itself. Her movements were robotic, endless, deranged.

Finished

“You like screwing around, don’t you?” she shrieked, maniacal laughter slipping past her lips. “Here! Let me make sure you never do again!”

Slashes and stabs became a blur. Blood sprayed across the bed, across her face, dripping from her fingers.

Alaric thrashed, limbs jerking in agony. His legs kicked wildly, then spasmed, then slowly stilled. The bedsheets beneath him. soaked red, the metallic stench of blood thickening the air.

Out in the corridor, Riley remained frozen, eyes fixed on the horror unfolding inside.

She felt nothing.

No pity.

No sorrow.

She had been raised in that house. That same bed had once been hers. And now, watching her so-called parents rip each other apart like rogue beasts fighting over a carcass?

It felt like justice.

One had stolen her life. The other had abandoned her to darkness.

Now one **was** blind. The other.... emasculated.

Was **it** extreme?

Yes.

But it **was** also deserved.

A soft smirk curled across her lips. Her shoulders loosened for the first time in days. The pressure in her chest eased.

Riley inhaled deeply, savoring the carnage.

Only evil can devour evil, she thought to herself. And that was the natural order of things.

Then—footsteps. Urgent. Rapid.

From the far end of the corridor, Elira stormed forward, flanked by startled medics and two warriors from her shadow unit.

Riley's eyes widened, but she had no time to flee.

In a heartbeat, a large figure moved.

Caelum Knox stepped in front of her, his massive frame shielding her completely. He pressed her gently into the corner between him and the wall, his scent enveloping her like a protective shroud.

Riley stayed silent lowering her head, letting her golden hair shield her face

Elra didn't notice her Her attention was locked on the carnage inside.

The door swung open.

And even the seasoned medics, used to battlefield wounds and rogue attacks, stumbled back in horror

The room looked **like** a bloodbath

Alaric lay writing **in** a crimson pool his lower body utterly destroyed Zara crouched beside him, her entire figure drenched in gore the knife still clutched in her urembling hard. Her face was streaked in red, her gown tattered, her **one** eye gleaming with madness

Elra gasped hands Rying to her mouth as the scene registered

Finished

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She looked at Alaric's ruined body—specifically his groin—and nearly collapsed.

She had no love for him. Not really.

But... that?

That was permanent.

He was done.

And though she was stunned, the horror lasted only a moment. She steadied herself. After all, what did she expect?

A man who would betray his Luna, his son, his entire bloodline—how could she have ever trusted him with her heart?

Deep down, she had always known Alaric was a rabid wolf—just waiting to turn on her.

She had feared he would kill her one day, just like he had tried to erase Riley.

And now... she knew he never would.

Because there was nothing left of him to fear.

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[723 words]

Chapter 186

Finished

Third Person's POV

To Elira, Alpha Alaric was never deserving of love—only manipulation. A heart as black as his was made for using others, not for receiving true loyalty.

She couldn't comprehend what kind of cursed bloodline had given rise to such a monster.

Dean Elira Blackthorn composed herself quickly. Her gaze sharpened as she turned toward the stunned medical staff.

“Well? Don’t just stand there—save him!”

Snapping to attention, the medics rushed to Alaric, fumbling to stabilize the blood-soaked Alpha and wheel him out of the

room.

Not far away, Luna Zara collapsed to the floor, unconscious and drained, her rage having consumed the last of her strength.

Dean Elira ordered her taken to the operating room as well—not out of mercy, but because the medics were watching. As the Dean of the Mooncrest Medical Wing, even she had to pretend she cared about saving the disgraced Luna.

Once the chaos cleared and silence returned to the hallway, Caelum Knox stepped to the side, revealing Riley, who had been shielded behind his tall, imposing frame.

“Why didn’t you tell Alpha Alaric the truth?” Caelum asked quietly. “That Scarlett isn’t even his blood? If he knew... it’d destroy him.”

Riley gave a soft, cool smile. “That’d be letting him off easy.”

“He loves draining people dry. So I’ll play by his rules—let the she-wolf he loves bleed him of every ounce of value he has.”

She folded her arms, her eyes calm yet icy. “Scarlett’s locked in a **cell** now. He’ll do anything to get her out. Even if it means selling off what remains of the Ebonclaw legacy.”

“And just when he thinks he’s sacrificed everything for his daughter—” **Her** voice dipped, poisonous sweet. “I’ll tell him the rest of Dean Elira’s pups? Not even his.”

“He sent his real son, Kael Vale, to prison for them. Imagine how that will taste when the truth hits.”

Caelum arched a brow. “You don’t pull punches.”

“Thanks,” Riley replied, her tone casual.

The two exchanged a quiet smirk.

They left the medical wing, heading for the parking lot. But just as they turned a corner, a figure rolled toward them in a rusted wheelchair.

The man was barely recognizable. His once-polished appearance **was** gone, replaced by sunken cheeks, hollow **eyes**, and tattered clothing. He looked like a wolf who'd **been cast** from his pack and left to rot.

It was Maddox-Riley's former mate.

He hadn't seen her in nearly two months. And now, suddenly, here she **was**—transformed.

Riley looked different. Her face was fuller. Her hair sleek and glossy Her **skin** glowed. She **was** no longer the girl who had once cowered beneath the weight of the Ebonclaw name.

She looked free.

And Maddux? He was nothing but a shadow of who he once was.

The difference between them was humiliating

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Finished

He had once been proud-commanding courtrooms, respected across Mooncrest and beyond. Now he couldn't even walk.

And standing next to Riley was a towering, broad-shouldered male whose presence radiated raw dominance.

A surge of jealousy roared through Maddox's chest.

"Who is he?" he growled, eyes burning as he looked at Riley like a wolf who'd just caught his mate in another male's bed.

Riley didn't even flinch. She glanced at him with chilling detachment—as if she were looking at a stranger begging on the street—and then turned her gaze away.

Maddox had lost control of his emotions ever since those two guards at Silverfang Den shattered his legs under orders from Duke.

After that came the disbarment. His license revoked. His career annihilated.

The last pieces of his life—his car, his condo, his savings—all gone in days.

Now he lived in a damp, mold–infested basement, the stench of decay and failure clinging to him like fleas.

Even during his worst years, he had never known this level of shame.

But through all of it, he clung to one thought: Riley.

He dreamed of her forgiveness. Of their past.

And now, here she **was**.

With another male.

Like he never mattered.

Maddox wheeled forward with a jolt, blocking her path. His voice cracked as he repeated the question, desperate and angry.

“Riley, I asked you—who **is** he?”

Riley’s gaze narrowed. She sighed, tired of the scene already.

“Who he **is**... has nothing to do with you.”

Her voice was like a dagger dipped in silver.

The words landed with a force that knocked the breath from Maddox’s lungs. His mouth opened, but no words came.

The wolf she once was—gentle, soft–hearted, eager to please—was gone,

And he had no place in the world she now walked.

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[900 words]

Chapter 187

Third Person’s POV

Finished

Maddox's fingers curled tightly around the metal frame of his wheelchair, knuckles paling from the strain. The biting cold of steel seeped into his bones, but it was nothing compared to the icy dread gnawing at his heart.

Was she drawing a line between them?

He wouldn't allow it.

"What do you mean it doesn't matter?" Maddox snapped, voice trembling with disbelief. "Riley, we're mates!"

Riley let out a mocking laugh. "You may have been my 'mate, Maddox, but you sure as hell weren't my father. You don't get to tell me who I see and do you need I repeat again that you have rejected me five years ago?"

Maddox's face flushed with rage. His eyes flared, locking onto Caelum Knox, who stood protectively at Riley's side. Envy burned in his gaze like a wildfire, a feral growl rising in his throat.

"You forgot our promise?" he spat, voice strained and low. "You said when I made something of myself, you'd stay by my side."

Riley's expression twisted with bitter amusement. The laugh that left her lips was sharp as a silver blade. But deep down, a wave of sorrow rolled beneath her mocking tone—a sorrow for the girl she used to be.

She had believed in Maddox.

Back then, in the cold halls of the Ebonclaw where they clung to each other like broken twigs in a storm, she had thought they'd never part.

It was one sentence from him—"I'll study law, and send everyone who's ever hurt you straight to the cells." That promise had bewitched her.

She worked herself to the bone to help him.

She slaved away at part-time jobs, entered every scholarship competition at Mooncrest Academy, and scraped by with the bare minimum. And every coin she earned? She sent it to Maddox—anonously—so his pride wouldn't suffer.

She thought she was helping him survive. Helping him climb.

In her dreams, Maddox would one day rise as one of Mooncrest's most respected legal Alphas, standing before the Council, protecting her like a silver-cloaked guardian.

But reality... was cruel.

Maddox hadn't sent her tormentors to prison. He'd sent her.

And worse—he spent her hard-earned money not on books or food, but on thousand-dollar sneakers, luxury jackets from rogue-hunting brands, watches worth a month's wage, and gifts for Scarlett.

Scarlett—pampered, spoiled, and utterly unimpressed by Maddox's pathetic attempts at courtship—threw those gifts to the house staff like scraps.

Riley, raised in poverty, had never known the brands. She hadn't realized that Maddox had dressed like a young heir for years, building himself a false identity as a born elite while feeding off her sacrifice.

It wasn't until Caelum Knox's investigation into the Ebonclaw Pack revealed that Scarlett had impersonated Riley to send Maddox anonymous donations... that Riley saw the truth.

He wasn't the same wolf she once loved.

He **was** greedy Vain Selfish

ite was the very kind of male she now despised

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Chapter 187

Her eyes darkened. Her voice dropped into a growl.

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"A promise?" she hissed. "Maddox, do you honestly think you deserve to speak that word?"

"You threw me into prison. You handed me over like I was trash."

"You really think I'd forgive you?"

She stepped closer. Her presence radiated Alpha blood now, cold and composed.

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Finished

“I’ve made it very clear how I feel about you. So spare me the delusion. You don’t even deserve to be called a stranger. At least strangers don’t make me sick to my stomach every time I see them.”

Maddox’s face twisted, a flush of shame and fury climbing his throat. His breath came in ragged gasps. His entire body trembled, humiliated and cornered.

“No... No!” he snapped. “It wasn’t me! You did that to yourself! If you hadn’t lured Tessa into the Black Forest—if she hadn’t been attacked by rogues and fallen into that coma—you never would’ve been sentenced! You brought it on yourself!”

Riley’s gaze turned glacial, her patience vanishing like mist under moonlight.

Smack!

Her hand connected with his cheek, the crack echoing through the air like thunder. His head snapped to the side.

“Are you blind? Or just completely delusional?” she hissed, voice low and vibrating with fury. “Tessa woke up. She remembered everything. And she cleared my name the moment she could speak.”

“She told them it wasn’t me who led her into that forest—it was Scarlett. Scarlett set her up. Scarlett left her to die!”

Her chest heaved with rage, the storm in her heart breaking free.

“And you—you knew! You knew, Maddox! You helped cover it up. You pinned it on me to save Scarlett. To keep me under your damn leash.”

“You ruined my life.”

Maddox’s mind blanked. He couldn’t process it.

He didn’t want to.

Because if he admitted he had been wrong five years ago...

Then he had truly destroyed everything between them.

So he clung to the lie. Tried to make it true. He wanted her to carry that false guilt forever—wanted her to need him. Depend on him. Belong to him.

He couldn’t stand the thought of losing her.

Especially not to someone like Caelum

He had known that Ropan Duskcliff once loved her. And back then, when he saw the growing closeness between them, he panicked

He couldn't let her go.

So **instead** he destroyed her

fr let the world brand her a criminal

Because if she was hated cast aside, beuken—then maybe she'd come crawling back

Maybe then she'd be hus again

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Chapter 187

He wasn't just obsessed.

He was possessed.

Even now, seeing her beside another wolf, Maddox's control shattered. The beast inside him howled.

He would rather ruin her than watch her be loved by someone else.

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[706 words]

Chapter 188

Riley's POV

I saw it the moment his eyes dropped to my left hand—the ring.

A simple obsidian band, snug on my middle finger. Lucien's promise.

And just like that, Maddox snapped.

His knuckles turned white where they clutched the arms of his wheelchair, the metal creaking beneath his fingers.

“What the hell is that ring?!” he growled. “Are you engaged?”

Finished

His voice climbed into a snarl, pure territorial rage. “Who the hell gave you permission to bond with some stray male?!”

His eyes burned, pupils dilated like a wolf ready to shift.

“Your heart should belong to me. Only me. I’m the one who can make you happy—not him. But no—while I was crawling through hell, you went and opened your legs for another mutt!”

“You’re disgusting! A low-born she-wolf in heat, missing a kidney and still this damn desperate for a mate?! First Ronan Duskcliff, and now this bastard? Tell me, Riley—how many males have you slept with? Huh? Tell me!”

His words dripped venom, filthy and rabid. He spoke like I was his property—his possession.

If this had been months ago, maybe I would’ve burned with shame, maybe even rage. But not today.

Today, I felt nothing but a frigid kind of clarity.

I glanced at the ring again. A tail ring that Lucien had worn once—now resized and resting on my hand. A symbol.

And just to spite Maddox, I leaned into Caelum’s arm, wrapping myself around him like I belonged there.

“That’s right,” I said sweetly, letting the words drip with triumph. “We’re together.”

Then I rested my other hand gently on my stomach.

And I’m pregnant.”

His breath hitched like someone had punched the wind from his lungs.

The word pregnant struck harder than a silver blade. I felt Caelum go rigid beside me, probably dying a little inside—but he stayed silent.

(Stars help him, he better play along.)

But Maddox?

He crumbled.

He looked like someone had gutted him and left him to bleed in the snow.

His lips parted, then closed again—no sound came. Just a strangled wheeze. His eyes turned wild, bloodshot, locked on my belly as if he could burn a hole through it with hate alone.

“You...” he gasped “You’re shameless!”

Then came the explosion. Full volume. Full madness.

“You don’t even know what it means to be a worthy she–wolf! Carrying some mongrel’s pup before a proper bonding ceremony? Are you not afraid? That male’s family could use the pup against you! You think he’ll protect you forever?”

“You’ve disappointed me. You’ve ruined yourself. I wouldn’t take you back even if you begged. Your womb’s already spoiled.

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Chapter 188

tainted with another male’s seed. You’ll never be worthy of my legacy. Never!”

“You make me sick.”

His words tore through the air like claws.

I stood tall. My spine straight, my eyes locked on his twisted, contorted face.

I didn’t flinch.

Finished

“Maddox,” I said coldly, “I must’ve been blind not to see how pathetically backward you are. I used to think you were clever. Now I wonder if you ever learned the difference between honor and poison.”

“If I had known that under your ‘elite student’ mask hid a self–righteous, misogynistic leech, I would’ve never sent you a damn coin—let alone every cent I earned.”

That hit him. I saw it in his eyes—the disbelief.

“What are you saying?” he rasped. “What do you mean you sent me money?”

He raised his voice, desperate, like volume could drown out the rising panic clawing at his insides. But his voice shook.

He already knew.

I leaned in, dropped my voice to a deadly whisper.

“Your tuition, your luxuries, every overpriced shirt, every brand–name coat... That was me. I funded your precious reputation. I bled for it. I worked three shifts and scraped every coin just so you wouldn’t have to suffer.”

“And what did you do with it?” My voice cracked with disgust. “You used my money to play rich boy on campus, chasing praise, chasing power—and worst of all, you used it to spoil Scarlett. Gifts, lies, fake promises. All with the blood money of the girl you abandoned.”

His shoulders slumped. The proud posture crumbled.

I could see it—the flicker of memories flashing in his head. The nights he flaunted his wealth. The fake smiles from classmates. The lies.

He thought it was all him.

Now he knew better.

And the shame... it settled on him like a curse.

Good

Because that’s all he ever deserved.

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[731 words]

Chapter 189

Third Person's POV

"No, this isn't true! You're lying, you're deceiving me—"

Finished

Maddox shouted at Riley, his voice sharp with desperation. "You were just a high school student back then! How could you have been sending me ten thousand every month?"

"Don't think I don't know who really supported me," Maddox sneered. "It was Scarlett. Only a wealthy heiress like her wouldn't care about a mere ten thousand. And you? You were never accepted by the Ebonclaw Pack. Not a single coin did they give you. So how could you possibly support me?"

It was clear Maddox had always known about Riley's difficult situation within the Ebonclaw Pack.

Yet when Riley suffered countless injustices there, Maddox had simply brushed it off with a dismissive, "You're just too sensitive."

He knew full well the Pack hadn't given her anything, but while he had ten thousand every month, he never bothered to spare even a hundred for her.

How foolish she must have been—to hand over every penny she earned without reservation, all to him.

A wave of profound sorrow surged through Riley's heart as she said coldly, "You never participated in any competitions. Of course you don't know that the prize for first place in the Mooncrest Academy Physics Tournament was hefty."

"I truly regret giving you all my prize money back then. If I had kept that money for myself, how much easier my life would've been. No one understands that better than you—Maddox, the 'top lawyer' who always wore brand names from head to toe during college."

Her voice was quiet but sharp as a blade, cutting straight through Maddox's pride and shaming him deeply.

"That's impossible. I don't believe you. You're lying..." Maddox clung to his last thread of denial.

Riley had no more patience to waste on his nonsense. Her expression calm, she said lightly, "Yes, yes, I'm lying to you."

With that, she turned without hesitation, taking Caelum Knox's arm and walking away, refusing to argue any further.

Her indifferent attitude was like salt poured on Maddox's wounds, fueling the raging fire of anger inside him.

He desperately pushed his wheelchair, wheels scraping sharp arcs against the floor, trying to catch up.

"Riley, stop right there! Don't walk away—explain yourself!" he shouted hoarsely.

But Riley neither heard nor wished to hear him.

Soon, Riley and Caelum got into the car. Caelum started the engine, and the vehicle sped away from the hospital.

Maddox stared blankly at the fading tail lights, his body collapsing completely into the wheelchair, eyes hollow and lost.

He kept muttering "Impossible," but deep down, he knew the harsh truth.

He had come to the hospital for a checkup on his leg injury, but now, all his thoughts were consumed by Riley's words—he had no mind left to care about his own legs.

At this moment, all he wanted was to see Scarlett—to get to the bottom of the truth

Scaricu, the heiress of the Ebonclaw Packs Mooncrest territory, had shocked everyone at the Matriarch Duskgrave's banquet by attempting to steal embroidery worth twenty million She was arrested on the spot.

Everyone at the banquet witnessed the scene, and it made the headlines that very night.

Maddox had seen the news, so he knew Scarlett was locked up in the holding facility

3:53 PM P P •

Chapter 189

Inside the detention center, dim yellow lights flickered in the oppressive air thick with tension.

Maddox and Scarlett sat opposite each other, separated by cold, unyielding iron bars.

Finished

He couldn't imagine that the proud girl who once carried herself like a swan, full of arrogance and grace, would fall so low.

Her head was shaved; large patches of damaged scalp exposed raw skin beneath the scabs, leaving a shocking pattern like a patchy Mediterranean, contrasting starkly with the sparse new hair growth—a laughable and pitiful sight.

Her innate pride and haughtiness had vanished without a trace. Now she looked like a featherless peacock—disheveled and broken.

When Scarlett's eyes caught sight of Maddox, a flicker of hope sparked within her—a hope that the top lawyer might be able

to save her.

But when she saw Maddox in his wheelchair, his clothes wrinkled and his face etched with fatigue and hardship, that flicker of hope was instantly extinguished, sinking deep into despair.

Yet Maddox was the first visitor she had seen in days. Though he looked worse for wear, she still put on a pitiful act, pleading softly, "Brother Maddox, please help me."

Back then, when Scarlett was as pure and beautiful as a water lily, her pitiful expressions were genuinely heart-wrenching.

Send Gifts

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

[714 words]

Chapter 190

Finished

Third Person's POV

Now, Scarlett's head was shaved, revealing a bizarre patchy scalp like a Mediterranean pattern. Her skin was dull and lifeless, and her entire being was worn down and haggard—utterly unrecognizable from the proud heiress she once was.

Such a sight stirred not a shred of pity in Maddox.

Gripping the cold iron bars tightly, Maddox's eyes fixed on Scarlett. His voice was low but burning with tell me who was it that really supported me all those years ago?"

Scarlett hadn't expected Maddox's visit to center on this question. Her eyes flickered, but she quickly face calm as she lied without hesitation, "Of course, it was me."

"Don't pretend!" Maddox bellowed. "Riley says it was her. Are you lying to me? Why would you do this?"

His gaze was sharp, as if trying to peel back every layer of Scarlett's disguise.

The truth was out.

ac "Scarlett.

herself, her

Scarlett's heart clenched. Seeing Maddox's furious, almost feral expression—like he wanted to tear her apart—she knew the pretense was over.

A wild, bitter laugh escaped her lips, laced with madness and triumph. "It took you five years to figure it out? You really are stupid."

"That's right! It was Riley who supported you all along. Can you believe she sent you all her money anonymously, while she herself went hungry and cold? And you? You spent her money on flashy brands, pretending to be some rich heir at Halston Academy. Hahaha—"

At the thought of all the suffering Riley endured, Scarlett laughed harder, head thrown back.

"Do you know how much satisfaction I got every time I saw you buying me gifts with Riley's, money, trying to win me over?"

"That wretched girl—how could she ever compare to me? Betrayed by her own father, brother, and childhood friend—it's what she deserves! Why was she born a noble heiress, while 1..."

Her voice cracked suddenly, eyes flashing venomous hatred.

She was nothing but the daughter of a doctor and a driver.

Taking away Riley's life, watching that heiress struggle beneath her feet, gave her a twisted sense of pleasure.

Maddox listened to Scarlett's venomous rant, feeling as if a knife had been plunged into his heart. Pain twisted his face until it was nearly unrecognizable, and he growled through clenched teeth:

"Scarlett!"

His roar nearly shattered the icy bars. Veins bulged on his neck as he wished he could shred this woman who destroyed his life and hurt Kiley to pieces.

"You poisonous woman!"

His voice was hoarse, seething with fury erupting from the depths of his soul. In that moment, he was a beast unleashed.

But Scarlett threw back her head and laughed even louder. In her current disheveled state, she looked like a demon.

Once, Maddox was the illustrious elite lawyer of Mooncrest, ambitious and full of promise. Scarlett had valued him greatly as

useful tool, sweet-talking tum with a gentle and charming facade

But now. Maddox was confined to a wheelchair, dressed in cheap, wrinkled clothes, his face pale and tired, reeking of unwashed filth from days without a proper bath

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Chapter 190

To selfish Scarlett, he was no longer worth pretending to please.

Finished

"If you weren't so hopelessly stupid, how else could I have used you? You have no right to blame me—blame yourself for being blind and foolish beyond cure!"

She paused, a sinister smile curling her lips, and continued coldly, "Let me guess—you only found out it was Riley supporting you because she told you herself, didn't she?"

She sneered, eyes sharp and cruel. "Riley must've broken your heart so badly that no matter how much you begged, she refused to forgive you, right?"

She clutched her belly and burst into a sharp, derisive laugh. "Oh, how pitiful you are! Hahaha—"

Maddox, having lost all use to her, became her target for venting.

Scarlett was a deeply selfish woman. Trapped in her miserable state, she could not bear the pain and sought others.

She poured out all the dark emotions pent up inside onto Maddox, watching his face twist with rage, guilt, and remorse. sick thrill bubbled up inside her.

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onto

A

Maddox shook the iron bars violently, eyes blazing with a ferocity that seemed ready to devour Scarlett whole.

“Poisonous witch—vile woman—you’ll rot in hell—”

His mind replayed every moment Scarlett had deceived him.

He had used the money Riley earned with such hardship to win Scarlett’s favor, and even caused Riley to serve five years in prison—all for Scarlett.

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

[599 words]

Chapter 191

Third Person’s POV

Regret consumed Maddox, sharp and relentless like a swarm of wolves gnawing at his heart.

Finished

“I won’t suffer? I’m the heiress of the Ebonclaw Pack, and my parents and brother love me dearly. They’ll find a way to get me out soon enough,” Scarlett lifted her chin arrogantly, eyes dripping with disdain.

Maddox’s face twisted in response, then curled into a mocking smile.

“Heiress of the Ebonclaw Pack? Don’t make me laugh. Didn’t you know your pack’s empire has already fallen? Your brother’s in custody, your parents crossed the Stormridge Pack’s Alpha and ended up crippled. They’re barely surviving – how would they even have time to care about you, their fallen princess?”

Maddox felt a dark satisfaction rise within him.

She tormented him, so he’d return the favor.

He expected shock or desperation from Scarlett, but she only smiled coldly, almost amused.

“They may have fallen, but that’s none of my concern. My real parents’ bloodline is strong and wealthy; they won’t stand by and watch me rot in here.”

Maddox’s expression stiffened as he fixed her with a penetrating stare, desperate to see through her lies, to prove this was just bluster.

“Save your tricks. If your real parents had that kind of power, why was I the one stuck in the Ebonclaw den with you for all those years?”

His teeth clenched, voice bitter with resentment.

Scarlett leaned back lazily, regarding him like a fool. “You really think you can draw secrets out of me? You overestimate yourself.”

“All your so-called skills were wasted on Riley. Do you know why they made you my defense? Because you and Riley grew up together only by breaking her could you break me.”

Her tone was full of cruel satisfaction. “Otherwise, why would a clueless rookie like you get picked to defend someone like me, an Alpha’s daughter?”

“I could have hired any lawyer and won that case. Anyone else would’ve risen to fame overnight in Mooncrest. But you? You just rode on the Ebonclaw name and thought you were some big shot!”

“Honestly, sometimes I almost pity Riley. A love-struck fool with a useless pack mother, a deadbeat brother, and you – her so-called mate who stabbed her in the **back**.”

“It wasn’t my fault she got framed and thrown in the brig it was yours and those closest to her who led her to **ruin**”

Scarlett never saw herself **as** wrong, to her, this was just the natural order of the **pack**: the strong survive, the weak perish.

If people were wise and trusted Riley more, she wouldn't have manipulated them so easily.

They weren't even blood—why should she give up everything for Riley's return?

To crush the true heirs beneath her paws **was** her victory

She crossed her arms watching Maddox's face contort with hatred and regret

"Just sit up Maddox bellowed like a mad beast

but never remorse for his own mistakes

His eyes lit with indignation and wild weariness you're a demon I was used you're the one who ruined everything

"A demon?" Scariest sneered. "This world's a jungle and I'm just surviving. Besides, didn't you want me the Ebonclaw

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Chapter 191

heiress

—

for my blood and status? You turned a blind eye to Riley's heart because you were greedy."

Finished

"I used you, sure. But I never forced you to flaunt Riley's money, pretending to be some wealthy prince at Halston Academy."

She shot him a mocking look, speaking each word like a blade: "You knew Riley was beaten, humiliated, and tortured in the big broken leg, needle pricks — and you did nothing."

—

Her words hit like a hammer to Maddox's heart.

He had to admit he'd been blinded by vanity, committing unforgivable sins.

Riley's grades at Mooncrest Academy had been stellar...

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[826 words]

Chapter 192

Finished

Third Person's POV

The radiance emanating from Riley was far too dazzling, completely overshadowing Maddox's own light.

She wasn't just intelligent, determined, or tenacious—she was a white wolf.

A rare, coveted bloodline. A symbol of purity and power blessed by the Moon Goddess herself.

And he he was just a omega—born orphan from the backwoods of Ebonclaw Pack.

A flicker of jealousy stirred deep within him. All he had ever wanted was to dim Riley's brilliance.

After all, Riley was just a woman. What good was being a white wolf if she couldn't even protect herself?

After graduation, she would only end up married with children—becoming a wife and mother tending to the pack's den.

As for himself, Maddox was no stranger to ambition or money. He had the sharp tongue of a lawyer, a silver—coated wolf form, and the wits to climb.

He could easily provide for Riley.

So why did she have to be so high—minded?

Why did she have to shine so unbearably bright?

These thoughts he buried deep within, knowing they were shameful. Knowing that the world revered the white wolf bloodline. But in his heart, he loathed that Riley's light made him feel small.

He told himself he wasn't wrong—but he also knew that speaking those thoughts aloud would bring only contempt.

So he said nothing when the Vale family hurt her.

Said nothing when Kael forced her to kneel.

Said nothing when Alaric dismissed her as a burden.

He watched, silently, while they tried to break her—while they locked up a rare white wolf like a common rogue.

A part of him wanted her broken.

He wanted her to fall, to be humbled, to lose that glow that always made everyone choose her.

He told himself it was for her own good.

Once her wings had been clipped—once the world ground her brilliance into the dirt—he would be there. To offer warmth To be the **only** hand she could hold onto

Then. Riley would have no choice but to depend on him, and would never **again** dream of becoming a scholar, a mentor, or a pack professed

Breaking her wings, dimming that divine white flame—it was all so she'd stop flying away.

He would be her safe haven, her anchor, the one who fed and clothed her

Wasn't that enough

But what Madras ever expected was that despite all the inhuman torture Kiley endured in the pack's prison, despite every seat and every broken lanches and remained unyielding

Leen dulled even turned sh all racated that sie antero bytu

She and only refused to depend us bus—she grew to hate him with every liter of her being

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Chapter 192

Finished

They had spent a long time together in the Ebonclaw, bonded by deep ties, yet Riley had coldly abandoned him without a second thought.

To Maddox, her cruelty was unfathomable.

Now she had found a wild mate, clearly prone to violence, and was carrying carrying his pup.

How shameless she was!

He resented Riley for her reckless mind, and he hated Scarlett even more for using him.

If it weren't for Scarlett's constant scheming, he and Riley would never have e come to this tragic point.

Maddox was utterly consumed by fury, recklessly shaking the iron bars of the prison cage.

The clang of metal echoed loudly, groaning under the strain as if it might be torn apart at any moment.

His eyes bulged like bronze bells, his face twisted violently by rage, features almost dislocated in a terrifying snarl—like a demon risen from the depths of the underworld.

“You damn wretched bitch!” Maddox roared hoarsely. “I'll kill you!”

His madness resembled a rabid wolf unleashed.

Scarlett watched Maddox's feral rage with delight flooding her heart like an unstoppable flood.

She laughed a sharp, piercing laugh that clashed eerily with his roar.

The more Maddox raged, the more wildly she laughed.

“Come then! If you've got the guts, kill me!” Scarlett taunted, eyes full of scorn and mockery. “You pathetic coward—only now realizing your mistakes, but it's too late!”

She laughed as she deliberately writhed her body, flaunting her victory before him.

Their commotion quickly drew the attention of the wardens.

Two pack enforcers arrived swiftly, one on each side, restraining Maddox.

Sull, Maddox struggled fiercely, kicking wildly and twisting desperately, trying to break free and charge Scarlett again.

“Let me go! Let me go!” he screamed, voice raw and breaking. “I’ll kill her! I swear I’ll kill her!”

His hateful gaze never left Scarlett, as if he wanted to burn her to ashes with his glare alone.

Scarlett’s smile grew even brighter as she watched Maddox being dragged away. She even made a mocking face at him and sheered. “You **can** stewin your regret out there. When I get out, I’m leaving this pack to enjoy life elsewhere, while you—just rot in **your** endless misery”

“Wretch-

Maddox’s curses faded down the long corridor as he was hauled from the holding den, until nothing remained but silence.

Outside, rugha had already deepened.

Maddox sat despondently in his wheelchair

The dum surfights cast wrak glummers on his face, worn and exhausted beyond his years.

Everything was over

Onte prosperous and respected bus career was to shattered bis huge w

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

[1,020 words]

Chapter 193

Third Person’s POV

Stormridge Pack – Duskgrave Estate.

Finished

Soft amber light spilled through the arched windows of the Duskgrave manor, casting warm glows across the garden path and bathing the stone courtyard in a peaceful glow. Inside the grand estate, Matriarch Duskgrave sat in her high-backed armchair, her expression tender as she looked at the young woman beside her.

“Riley, dear, your health is fragile. Go on up and get some rest,” she said kindly, voice gentle like falling snow.

Riley shook her head slowly, her fingers tightening slightly around the velvet of the armrest. “I’ll wait a little longer for Prince

armrest. “I’ll wait

Lucien.”

The old Luna’s heart softened. She had long grown fond of Riley—kind, quiet, strong despite all she had endured. Her eyes inadvertently dropped to the ring on Riley’s finger, and her smile brightened, deepening the wrinkles etched into her face.

That ring. It had once belonged to Lucien’s biological mother. For years, Lucien had guarded it as if it were a sacred relic. When he was a pup, he wore it around his neck with red thread. As he grew, he began wearing it on his little finger, never once parting with it.

Now, it was on Riley’s finger. That alone was proof—Lucien had made his choice. He’d chosen his mate, not out of duty, but with his whole heart.

“Well then, I’ll go up,” Matriarch Duskgrave said, rising with some effort and offering Riley a warm nod. “But don’t wait too long, child.”

“I won’t, Matriarch Duskgrave,” Riley replied softly, watching the elder disappear slowly up the stairs with the help of Mrs. Beck.

The living room fell quiet.

Riley curled up slightly on the plush couch, staring out into the night. Her thoughts wandered, far from the glowing hearth and the comfort of this new home.

Back at the Ebonclaw Pack manor—her childhood house—there had been no warmth. After school, she had returned to darkness. Not the kind that came from the absence of light, but the kind that came from being unwanted.

She would stand silently in the cold entry hall, too afraid to turn on the lights. No one greeted her. No one asked if she'd eaten. She'd listen to the ticking of the clock and the silence between its beats, aching for someone to care.

It had been Mia, the elderly housemaid, who once left the kitchen light on for her. Just that small, quiet act had warmed Riley's frozen heart. It was one of her few memories of tenderness in the Ebonclaw home.

Because she had **once** known what it meant to be forgotten, Riley now cherished every glimmer of care from the Duskgraves.

She wanted to wait for Lucien, like the fifteen-year-old girl who once waited by the door in winter, hoping someone—anyone—would remember she was there

Time passed slowly. The estate was hushed, peaceful. Only the grandfather clock's ticking broke the silence, marking each minute's passing with patient resolve.

When fatigue finally overcame her, Riley lay down gently on the couch, *her* delicate body curling into itself like a pup seeking comfort. She closed her eyes, letting sleep pull her under.

That was the sight Lucien Duskgrave turned his head to

The **Alpha** prices of Sormridge stood quietly in the doorway, his keen eyes sweeping the room. His grandmother **and** Mrs. Beck had clearly retired for the night.

Only Kiley remained—aming like a flame kept turning past for him.

Something in his normally cold raprysson stirred.

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Chapter 193

His footsteps lightened as he approached her.

Finished

Carefully, he leaned down, strong arms slipping under her shoulders and knees. She was so light, so breakable, as he lifted her against his chest.

Lucien carried her up the staircase with slow, sure steps. At the bedroom door, he paused, then gently laid her on the bed. His hands drew the covers over her like handling fine silk, each movement measured and quiet.

“Miss Riley,” he murmured lowly, a ghost of warmth in his voice, “may you have a good dream tonight.”

Then he turned, tall and silent as a shadow, and left the room—closing the door with barely a click.

But Lucien didn’t return to his own quarters.

Instead, he walked down the hall to the study, his long legs swift, his posture sharp with purpose. He sat at his heavy desk, flicked on the lamp, and the glow lit up the cold planes of his face.

He began reviewing the documents waiting for him—pack affairs, trade routes, court reports. The only sound in the room was the faint scrape of pen on parchment.

Fifteen minutes later, the silence shattered with a sharp ring.

He answered at once. “Speak.”

“Alpha Prince,” came Duke’s voice from the other end, tight with urgency. “I spotted Maddox.”

Lucien’s eyes narrowed.

After dropping Lucien off, Duke had driven toward his own den. On the way, he remembered he’d run out of cigars. He pulled over to a corner shop—and there, in a shadowy alley, he heard a soft, broken groan.

Drawn by the sound, he followed it, turning into the alleyway. Under the dim pack lights, he found Maddox collapsed in a pool of blood, face swollen, ribs jutting out, a picture of misery.

Earlier that day, Caelum Knox had already relayed Maddox’s vile threats and taunts to Lucien. Duke had been there. They had both heard what Maddox dared say to Riley.

Now, seeing him half—dead and discarded like trash, Duke hesitated only for a second before calling Lucien.

Lucien’s voice dropped in temperature, like frost layering a blade. “Take him to the pack hospital. Don’t let him die.”

Duke paused. “You want him... alive?”

“Alive,” Lucien repeated. “But don’t let him live well.”

A chill crawled down Duke’s spine.

Then Lucien added lips curving into something cold and inhuman. "His legs are gone anyway. No point keeping them. **Have** the medics amputate.

Duke froze

Even over the call the silence rang louder than thunder. The very suggestion made his stomach twist

Still, far lowed his head instinctively "Understood. Alpha

He hung up

In the study. Lucien remained motionless staring into the shadows beyond the **Lamps** glow His expression was unreadable- but share us these **storn** colored eyes fury sunnered Fury as puse for what had been dose to Baley but for what Maddas reprepared

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He would suffer

Share to your friends

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

[790 words]

Chapter 194

Third Person's POV

Finished

Although Maddox's legs had been broken, if given proper treatment and time, his werewolf regeneration would have allowed a full recovery.

But fate had a crueler plan for him tonight.

No one knew who had found Maddox—nor who had beaten him so savagely he lay barely alive. Had Duke not arrived in time, the rogue alley rats might have been feasting on his carcass by dawn.

After hanging up the call, Duke obeyed Lucien Duskgrave's order without hesitation, arranging for Maddox to be discreetly moved to a private facility under Stormridge Pack control.

Meanwhile, the one responsible for turning Maddox into a broken mess was calmly shedding her bloodstained gloves and black coat in a shadowed alley nearby. Every move Carmen made was clinical, deliberate—devoid of emotion.

She struck a match.

The sharp hiss of fire filled the silence.

The fabric curled and blackened instantly as flames devoured the bloodstained evidence. The firelight danced across Carmen's face—an expressionless mask carved from ice and shadows.

She was pale, cold, stunning.

There was nothing soft about her beauty. It was refined like a blade—sharp, ruthless, and dangerous to touch. Her eyes were deep voids, her lips unmoving, her posture erect beneath a black combat jacket that clung to a figure made for speed and death. She looked less like a girl and more like a weapon forged under a blood moon.

Only once the flames had reduced everything to ash did the heat inside her chest finally cool.

So why had she done it?.

The answer lay an hour in the past.

It was Friday evening. With the weekend approaching, Mooncrest fell into a lull. Mia—who had been fully absorbed in caring for Riley for weeks—finally carved out time to see her own daughter.

They met at Moonshadow Tavern, a wolf-owned wild-game restaurant near the edge of Stormridge territory, known for rare meat and blood-infused wine.

Carmen sat across from her mother, tearing into seared venison as she casually inquired about Riley—her beloved “sister.”

Mia's expression softened **as** she spoke. She told of Lucien's quiet protectiveness, Matriarch Duskgrave's approval, Mrs. Beck's careful tending. Riley had finally found somewhere to feel **safe**.

And Carmen felt her tightly coiled nerves begin to loosen.

But then Mia spoke of the findings Caelum Knox had uncovered.

About Maddox

About the humiliation, betrayal, and selfish cruelty he had inflicted on Riley for years.

The chopsticks th Carmen's hand snapped in half.

A chilling silence fell over the table.

Her expression never changed. But her blood boiled

Anyone who had ever hurt Riley—anyone—was already dead in Carmen's mind. Their bodies just hadn't caught up **yet**

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Chapter 194

Fate, it seemed, agreed.

As Carmen walked out of the tavern, the scent hit her nose before her eyes caught up.

Maddox.

In a wheelchair. Slowly wheeling past the window, too broken and too arrogant to realize death was stalking him.

It was destiny.

"Mom, Dean just messaged me," she lied. "Urgent notice from Ashmoor Academy. I'll stay in the dorms tonight."

Mia, none the wiser, nodded in concern. Carmen kissed her cheek, then vanished into the shadows.

She tailed Maddox quietly.

Once the streets emptied, she struck.

A sack went over his upper body. Her fists followed.

He screamed. She didn't stop.

Finished

She dragged him into the filth-ridden alley like trash. Found a jagged stone. Smashed it into his knees. Again. And again. Until the only sound left was the wet crunch of bones.

By the time she was done, Maddox couldn't even whimper.

Now, she stood beneath the flickering lamp at the end of the alley. Her long shadow stretched across the pavement. She exhaled slowly and pulled out her phone to summon a ride.

Before she could press the button, headlights sliced through the night.

She narrowed her eyes against the glare.

An obsidian-black Porsche rolled to a slow, deliberate stop in front of her.

The driver's door swung open.

Out stepped a man in his early twenties, tall and lean, dressed in expensive streetwear. His tousled dark hair and crooked grin made him look like trouble wrapped in silk.

"Carmen," he drawled, voice low and familiar. "Waiting for a ride? Need a lift back to the manor or the academy?"

Carmen stiffened.

She knew that voice.

Jace Hale.

The smirking bastard who had once tried to pour whiskey down her throat at Silverfang Den. The same brat who'd slurred about some heartbreak before tossing red wine across her chest when she refused to entertain his drunken nonsense

A minor heir from a lesser Mooncrest's pack. Spoiled Reckless. Forgettable,

He had no idea who she was **that** night

But she remembered everything

And if face dough she'd let that gu

He was a foul

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Very soud

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Chapter 194

Carmen's expression didn't shift. Her gaze slid up to meet his, cold and unreadable.

Then she smiled.

And just like that, Jace's grin faltered.

Because deep inside, something primal whispered that he'd just looked a predator in the

And it was already too late.

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

[938 words]

Chapter 195

Finished

Third Person's POV

Back at the Silverfang Den, Jace Hale had been surrounded by a few other Stormridge elites—young wolves from powerful families, all drunk and arrogant. When Carmen refused to comply with their demands, they began to get handsy.

She was already prepared to smash a bottle over their heads when, unexpectedly, Duke stepped in.

He looked sharp in his tailored suit, clearly not the average drunk in the bar. Sensing an opportunity, Carmen instantly shifted gears, adopting the guise of a delicate, helpless little lamb. The kind of girl a self-righteous noble might want to save.

That little performance bought her more than a getaway—it gave her leverage.

She later returned the umbrella Duke had lent her, a small gesture laced with calculated intention. That move alone laid the groundwork for the game she played afterward, subtly leading him on while keeping her claws hidden.

Carmen thought she'd never have to cross paths with Jace Hale again. But fate had other plans.

Every time she stepped outside the academy gates, it seemed, she'd run into him or one of his cronies.

Jace might have been too drunk to remember her from that night, but his friends certainly hadn't forgotten. They felt humiliated that she hadn't agreed to drink with them, and even more so after she'd made a scene in public.

So, when they spotted her again at a shopping mall, they pounced—dragging her into a men's restroom, intending to “teach her a lesson.”

They had no idea who they were dealing with.

By the time Carmen was done with them, one had a butterfly knife wound in his thigh, another had swallowed a toilet full of water, and the last was begging for his mother while she beat him with the bathroom mop until his nose broke.

She'd left them there like garbage, wiping her hands clean.

The next day, however, those men somehow tracked down her name and school. They threatened her, saying if she didn't agree to accompany them at the Den again, they'd make sure she wouldn't survive another week in Mooncrest.

Carmen didn't scare easily.

They tried to corner her a third time—this time in a private booth lined with expensive liquor. Jace had leaned back in the plush seat, grinning arrogantly as he pointed to the fifty bottles before her.

“Drink all of these,” he sneered, “and we'll call it even.”

They expected her to panic. To cry. To beg.

They didn't know Carmen.

The second they let their guard down, she grabbed a bottle and smashed it across one of their heads. Blood sprayed, panic erupted. Then came the butterfly knife—flashing silver under the dim club lights.

Before they could run, she had them drinking the rest of the liquor themselves, bottle after bottle, their faces pale and terrified

“Remember,” she whispered coldly, pressing the blade to one of their necks, “I'm not someone you scare. I'm someone you survive—if you're lucky.”

You want to report me to the authorities?” she added with a dark smile. “Go ahead. Just be ready. Because when I'm out. I won't come for justice—I'll come for blood.”

What none of them knew was that these spoiled wolves were heirs to several of Mooncrest most powerful families. They were used to bullying others, never being bested—let alone by a woman.

And Carmen wasn't just any woman. She was chaos wrapped in silk, violence in high heels.

3:54 PM P P .

Chapter 195

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Finished

After being publicly beaten and privately threatened, those arrogant brats vanished. Not even a whisper of retaliation followed.

Strangely enough, they developed a strange admiration for her.

Privately, they began referring to her with something that sounded disturbingly like reverence: "Alpha Carmen."

Now, standing under the cold glow of a streetlamp, Carmen flicked her butterfly knife in one hand with bored elegance as Jace Hale stepped out of his flashy Porsche.

He wore a charming grin, but Carmen saw right through it.

"Waiting for a ride?" he asked, flashing teeth like he thought himself suave. "Need a lift back to campus?"

Her expression didn't change, but the blade in her fingers spun faster, glinting under the lamplight.

"You here to start something," she said flatly, "or just looking to die?"

Jace stiffened.

To be fair, he didn't exactly dislike Carmen. In fact, he was obsessed with her. That face—so cold and sharp it could slice—drove him insane. And that temper? That explosive, unrestrained violence?

Hotter than hell.

Sure, she scared him. But she also thrilled him.

Women in his world were all sugar and submission. Carmen was blood and fire.

He chuckled nervously, hands raised in mock surrender. “You’re funny, Carmen. I just saw you standing alone. Thought I’d offer a ride, is all.”

“Oh?” she murmured, not missing a beat as the blade danced over her knuckles.

“Y–yeah,” Jace stammered. “Just being... friendly.”

Carmen tilted her head, her gaze like a dagger slicing through the lies on his tongue. “Not planning to **ask** me to pour drinks for your rich friends again?”

He paled. “Of course not! I wouldn’t dare.”

She stared him down for a moment longer, then, with a slow smirk, folded the knife shut and slid it back into her jacket.

Jace exhaled like he’d been holding his breath underwater.

Carmen didn’t smile, but the corner of her mouth lifted—just a touch. Not warmth. Amusement, maybe. Or warning.

“Where are you headed?” Jace asked, still trying his luck.

Her eyes narrowed slightly, as if gauging whether he was still full of shit.

The night wind stirred her dark coat, and she stepped forward, each movement elegant, predatory.

“I don’t ride with wolves who cry when they get scratched,” she murmured, then brushed past him and disappeared into the shadows, heels clicking softly behind her.

Jace stood there a while, unsure whether he wanted to run... or follow.

One thing was clear.

He’d never met a wolf like her.

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[822 words]

Chapter 196

Finished

Jace trailed after Carmen for a while before she finally spoke, her voice as the moonlight on a winter lake. "Then drive me back to Ashmoor."

Jace, the notorious rich rogue of Mooncrest, immediately scrambled to open the car door for her, a half-eager grin hanging on his face.

Carmen had just lifted one foot to enter the car when a black Maybach screeched to a halt in front of them.

The passenger door was flung open, and a tall man in a dark suit leapt out like a shadow unchained. In the blink of an eye, he yanked Carmen behind him and threw a solid punch at Jace's face.

Carmen blinked. Even she hadn't expected Duke to suddenly show up.

Her pupils dilated in surprise, but she quickly regained composure, slipping once again into her cool, detached aura like a second skin.

Jace, too stunned to react, took the punch square on his cheekbone. A dull crack echoed as Duke's fist landed with ruthless precision, the force snapping Jace's head to the side. A bruised flush bloomed immediately, deep violet spreading like rot under the skin.

Reeling, Jace staggered back a few steps, nearly collapsing.

He steadied himself, panting, fury rising in his eyes. "Who the hell are you?!"

Duke said nothing. His thin lips remained pressed into a hard line, and a dangerous gleam lit up in his storm-grey eyes. Without hesitation, he drove another punch into Jace's gut.

Jace let out a low groan, doubling over. His pride—one nurtured by privilege and bloodline—burned hotter than the pain. No one laid hands on the Mooncrest elite. No one, except Carmen. And now this bastard?

He threw a kick at Duke's knee, teeth bared.

Carmen, by now, had retreated a few steps and leaned leisurely against Duke's Maybach, arms crossed, watching the scuffle with mild interest.

Jace's kick never landed.

Duke caught his ankle midair, twisted, and slammed him onto the pavement in one clean, brutal motion. The sound of impact echoed in the still night.

Standing over him, Duke's voice **was** like a blade—low, cold, absolute. “If you want your family to survive the season, stay the hell away from Carmen.”

The wind picked up, lifting strands of Carmen's ink-black hair as she studied Duke.

Veins bulged along his neck, his jaw clenched tight, and the tension in his frame radiated power. The gold-rimmed glasses on his face gave him a deceptive refinement, but his fists told another story—one of violence, efficiency, and control.

Carmen's eyes narrowed. One word popped into her mind: dangerous.

She flicked a lock of hair around her finger lazily, her gaze traveling across the sharp cut of Duke's waistcoat and the lean muscle beneath.

Wide shoulders. Tapered waist. Long legs. A wolf in scholar's clothing.

If she hadn't already known he batted for the other team, she might have been interested.

Duke turned, his eyes locking with hers. For a moment, Carmen didn't shift her gaze. And Duke saw it—the flash of something far from the soft, helpless image she'd once presented.

No. This was not the same girl he'd seen trembling outside the Silverfang Den, scared and desperate.

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Chapter 196

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He blinked. Was he imagining it?

Carmen quickly noticed the change in his expression and dropped the mask. In the next heartbeat, her body tensed, eyes flicking downward, hands gripping the hem of her coat with practiced innocence. Her lips quivered ever so slightly, and her entire demeanor screamed vulnerability.

Duke exhaled slowly.

Must've been the light. Or his imagination.

He walked to her without a word, opened the door, and shoved her gently into the passenger seat. Then he circled around to the driver's side and slid in.

Tires screeched against asphalt as they peeled away, leaving Jace lying on the curb, one hand over his bruised ribs.

Watching the Maybach disappear, he wailed with theatrical despair.

“Carmen—You said I’m your little wolf! How could you ride off with the guy who just wrecked my face? That’s so cold... so

cruel...!”

Inside the car, silence stretched thin between Carmen and Duke.

His hands were clenched around the steering wheel, his jaw tight.

“You shouldn’t be out this late by yourself,” he said, voice clipped. “You have any idea what would’ve happened if I hadn’t passed by?”

“No one asked you to stop,” she muttered under her breath.

But Duke didn’t hear it—or pretended not to.

“This is the third time,” he ground out. “First time at Silverfang Den—you were dragged into a booth with five drunk pack heirs. I pulled you out. Second time, back alley near Mooncrest Station—if not for the patrol, who knows what those Rogues would’ve done. And tonight? Carmen, are you trying to get yourself killed?”

She turned her head to look out the window, lips pressed into a silent smile. The streetlights flickered past, one by one, reflecting in her eyes like slivers of cold moonlight.

“Some things,” she whispered, “aren’t as dangerous as they look”

Duke’s jaw ticked. He didn’t understand her.

He wasn’t supposed to

But that was the whole point.

Carmen never wanted to be understood—only underestimated. And that made her all the more lethal.

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[760 words]

Chapter 197

Duke spoke with a tone of lingering fear.

Finished

If he hadn't run into the injured Maddox earlier and rushed him to the healers, he would've been home by now—and wouldn't have arrived just in time to stop Carmen from being harassed.

"You're still a student at Ashmoor Academy. Do you have absolutely no sense of safety, walking around the streets alone this late?"

Carmen listened to his constant scolding with a cold expression. Her response was simple: "Thank you."

Had she not known that Duke was close friends with Thoe Hale, she might've actually thought better of him.

But alas.

People flocked together for a reason. Anyone who could get along with someone like Theo Hale was no doubt just as untrustworthy.

Duke frowned. He wasn't saying all of this to get a thank-you. He wanted her to understand that she shouldn't be wandering alone at night. It wasn't safe.

He opened his mouth to say more but paused when he caught her reflection in the rearview mirror. Carmen had turned her head, her gaze fixed calmly on the fleeting lights outside the car window, her demeanor as distant as frost.

The rest of the ride was silent.

Eventually, the car pulled up in front of Ashmoor University of Technology's gates.

The campus entrance was deserted, bathed in the faint glow of the old streetlamps. The large iron gates were locked, and the light in the guard post was already out.

Duke let out a sharp breath. "Out."

Carmen didn't react to his attitude. She opened the car door without a word and walked straight toward the campus gates.

Only to find them tightly shut.

Her brows furrowed slightly.

She hadn't realized she'd missed curfew.

Well then. Time to go home.

She turned and began walking down the road, her long shadow stretching behind her under the streetlights.

Duke remained seated in the car, watching her retreating figure with disbelief.

She'd rather walk all the way back alone than ask him for help?

He was angry—but more than that, worried.

It was already past eleven. What if she ran into trouble again?

Duke cursed under his breath, started the engine, and slowly pulled up beside her. He rolled down the window,

“Get in.”

Carmen kept walking “I don't need your help.”

He slammed his hand on the horn. The sharp honk pierced the night air and startled her.

She turned, glaring. “Are you insane?!”

PM

Chapter 197

Finished

“I should be asking you that!” Duke snapped back. “You're a girl, walking alone at midnight? What if that bastard from earlier had done something to you? Even if you made it back to school, you're locked out. Were you planning to sleep on the sidewalk?!”

Carmen stared at him with cool, steady eyes, her stubbornness unyielding.

Duke met her gaze, his voice softening. “Just get in. I’ll take you wherever you need to go.”

He was giving her a way out. No need to make things harder for herself.

Besides, her house was over thirty kilometers away. If she walked, she’d end up with blisters.

Carmen finally got in. The rest of the ride passed in silence, save for a few directions she muttered now and then.

Soon, they reached her home.

A rural area, quiet and dark. Only the occasional bark of a stray dog broke the stillness.

But when she reached her gate, she realized—it was locked.

“Seriously?” she muttered.

Her mother wasn’t home. She must have returned to the Duskgrave estate again.

And in her rush to leave the dorm, Carmen hadn’t brought her house key.

Now her only option was a nearby motel—except there wasn’t one in the area.

She looked up at the starless sky, utterly speechless.

Duke, still in the car, saw her standing there with that defeated look on her face and couldn’t help but laugh.

“Wait, don’t tell me... you forgot your key on purpose, just to find an excuse to come home with me?”

Carmen’s face remained blank **as** she stared him down.

Duke immediately regretted the joke. After what had nearly happened last time—after how close he’d come to crossing a line -he knew she probably wanted nothing to do with him.

He straightened up, all humor gone. “Alright, I’ll take you to a hotel.”

Carmen didn’t refuse.

The ride felt heavier now.

Carinen stared out the window, her face like still water. Streetlights slid across her features, casting fractured shadows.

Duke glanced at her **in** the mirror. Her expression was emotionless, cold. He sighed.

Yeah. She **was** still scared of him after **last** time.

Understandable. She was **a** university student—young, a bit naïve, and probably not used to men who didn't know how to joke properly

He made *a* silent promise to himself:

No more thoughtless jokes.

No more crossing lines.

She already had enough trouble in her life. He didn't want to be one more.

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[739 words]

Chapter 198

Finished

Duke never would've guessed that the only reason Carmen hadn't already made a move on him.... was because she mistakenly thought he was gay.

The car pulled up outside a low-key yet refined inn near the edge of Mooncrest. Duke got out first, opened the passenger door for her, and escorted her inside to handle the check-in personally.

Once the room was arranged, he reached into his pocket and pulled out the black card he hadn't managed to give her the last time. He extended it toward her without hesitation.

"About what happened before..." Duke's voice was low and sincere, tinged with regret. "I was out of line. This card—it's a small gesture. I hope you'll accept it."

He kept his tone soft, non-threatening, but when Carmen hesitated, he forced the card into her hand.

Carmen blinked, momentarily taken aback.

She hadn't expected him to actually go through with it.

"I... I don't need this," she said coldly.

But only she knew how much she needed that money.

Still, an image had to be maintained—her persona couldn't shatter so easily.

When it was time to perform, she performed well.

"You take it." She tried to hand it back.

Duke had expected her to refuse. This girl—stubborn and willful—still carried the untainted pride of a university student.

A million credits? She turned it down without even blinking.

It only made Duke see her in a better light.

At least all the running around tonight hadn't been for nothing.

He shoved her hand away. "I said take it. If you don't want it, throw it in the trash."

His voice held a quiet dominance. His gaze was unyielding.

"It's late. Get some rest," Duke said as he turned to leave, arching a brow at himself. In his mind, his performance just now had been perfect—cold, cool, confident. Surely enough to leave a deep impression on the girl.

He didn't realize Carmen was watching his retreating figure with a smirk dancing on her lips.

Amused.

She had one thought: Sp dumb. So clueless. But so fun.

Just for being this entertaining, she'd forgive the fact that he was friends with people like Kael Vale and Theo Hale.

As long as he didn't mess with Riley, she'd let him be.

Feeling more than satisfied, Carmen tucked the card into her pocket like a precious trophy.

Tomorrow, she'd go find Riley and discuss their plans for leaving Mooncrest behind.

Ber mother had told her that the Duskgrave wolves treated Riley well.

But Carmen had learned—never trust men.

Especially not rich, possessive Alphas.

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Chapter 198

Finished

Today they doted on you like a goddess. Tomorrow, they could destroy you without blinking—taking back everything they once gave and more.

Carmen knew: after what Riley had been through, she probably didn't trust men anymore either.

That night, Carmen slept peacefully. No dreams.

By the time the early sunlight touched the rooftops, she was already up and moving.

Yesterday, her mother had given her the address of the Duskgrave estate.

Her connection to Riley wasn't just sisterhood.

For Riley, the entire Ebonclaw Pack had been nothing but cold faces and sharp tongues—except for Mia, the old housekeeper.

And Carmen.

Carmen had once biked through a torrential rainstorm to deliver Riley's exam admission slip the morning of her Mooncrest Academy entrance exam. She'd broken her wrist in the process.

Because of that injury, Carmen's own Mooncrest Academy entrance exam had suffered. She missed the chance to get into Mooncrest Academy and instead landed at Halston Academy.

Riley had blamed herself for that for years.

Neither Mia nor Carmen had owed her anything—but they’d both treated her with real warmth.

That was why, when the Ebonclaw wolves tried to use Mia and Carmen to threaten Riley after she got out of prison, she had kept silent, enduring everything, just to protect them.

And for Carmen, Riley wasn’t just a sister. She had been a mentor.

Before Riley, Carmen’s grades had been average at best.

But with Riley’s help—personal tutoring, three years straight, through storms and hardship—Carmen rose to the top of her class.

From first year to third, she’d ranked number one in the grade. Her academic awards lifted a massive financial burden off her mother’s shoulders.

Even when the wrist injury ruined her chances at Mooncrest, Riley hadn’t given up on her.

While in prison, Riley had asked her mother to pass down all three years’ worth of her hand-written notes to Carmen.

Those notes had helped Carmen, despite coming from a regular high school, get into Ashomoor University—one of the top- ranked universities in the city.

Now, it was Carmen’s turn to repay the favor.

And for Riley, she’d fight the entire world if needed.

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[756 words]

Chapter 199

Third Person’s POV

Duskgrave Estate.

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Finished

When Riley opened her eyes, she felt the disorientation of waking somewhere unfamiliar—until the scent of night-blooming roses and clean linen grounded her. She was in her room. Somehow, during the night, Lucien must have carried her up from the lounge.

A flush crept up her neck.

Ever since arriving at the Stormridge Pack's stronghold, it felt like all she'd done was burden Lucien. He was an Alpha prince -untouchable, powerful, refined. And she was... a fallen daughter of the Ebonclaw Pack, stripped of status and shadowed by betrayal.

She wanted to repay him somehow. But what could she offer someone like Lucien Duskgrave?

Riley exhaled slowly. No more debts. Today, she'd do at least one thing for him.

After washing up, she padded down the stairs. Before entering the kitchen, she cracked the villa's heavy front door open, allowing the fresh morning air to slip inside. If Duke or Caelum Knox arrived, she wouldn't hear the doorbell—and she refused to miss their arrival again.

The silence of her world was different now. It wasn't peaceful—it was hollow. Every quiet moment felt like a reminder of what had been taken from her.

So she focused on the only thing she could control: breakfast.

Outside, Carmen stood at the gates of the Duskgrave estate.

She lifted her eyes to the towering marble façade, breath catching in her throat. The estate looked less like a home and more like a fortress carved from moonlight and stone—its columns thick and ancient, its walls etched with sigils of dominance and Stormridge lineage.

White roses sprawled in the front garden, their petals heavy with dew, each one as pristine and sharp-edged as cut glass. The air smelled of wildflowers, old money, and the kind of power only a royal-blooded Alpha could command.

Carmen had never felt smaller. But she straightened her spine.

Is Riley really okay in a place like this? she wondered.

She rang the bell.

Nothing.

Frowning, she hesitated—then pushed. The door creaked open.

She stepped inside.

The estate was silent except for the distant, comforting aroma of congee simmering in bone broth. Following the scent, she reached the kitchen threshold and froze.

There she **was**—Riley.

Standing before the stove, back straight, sleeves rolled up, quietly stirring the pot as steam curled around her like a second

skin.

Riley, Carmen called softly

No response.

Carmen stepped closer, voice rising, “Riley? It’s me—Carmen.”

3:54 PM P P.

Chapter 199

Still nothing.

Finished

Riley stirred the congee slowly, lost in rhythm, her entire focus on the small silver pot as though nothing else in the world existed.

Carmen’s heart pounded. Something was wrong.

“RILEY!” she yelled, voice bouncing off the marble walls.

No reaction.

But Carmen didn’t miss it—her wolf felt it. The stillness in Riley was wrong. Her body moved, but her ears... did not.

Her eyes widened. Riley couldn’t hear her.

Back at the infirmary, she'd seemed fine. But now? The truth hit her like a blade to the gut—Riley had gone deaf.

Her nails dug into her palms as fury surged through her chest. Maddox. Kael Vale. Theo Hale. Scarlett. The whole cursed Ebonclaw lineage.

What did they do to her?

Then—Riley turned.

Their eyes met.

Her gaze lit with surprise, then warmth, and her mouth curved into a soft smile. “Carmen? What are you doing here?”

That single moment, that soft voice—Carmen's fury vanished beneath the wave of relief and affection.

She forced a bright smile. “Missed you. So I came.”

But her gaze never left Riley's face. She studied every flicker of emotion, every twitch of the jaw, every shadow beneath her

eyes.

Riley's expression remained gentle **as** she reached for Carmen's hand, her touch warm and grounding. “Come sit. The congee's almost ready.”

She turned to guide her toward the living room, but Carmen held her ground.

“I'll help in the kitchen.”

Riley chuckled, a sound as soft **as** falling **ash**. “The oil and smoke—no need. I've got it.”

Carmen hesitated. She wasn't entirely convinced. Riley had heard her—had responded to her. So had she imagined the earlier silence?

Trying to sound casual, she replied, “I don't mind.”

Seeing her persistence, Riley nodded and turned back to the pot, continuing to stir gently. “Then you can fry a few eggs.”

Carmen moved to the stove silently, still watching Riley with narrowed eyes.

Something wasn't right. Her instincts told her the truth still hid beneath that calm expression, and Riley... Riley had always been good at wearing masks.

But if there was one thing Carmen **was** sure of—it was that no matter what happened next, she would tear through anyone who dared to hurt the girl who once carried her books home in the rain and **gave** up everything to protect her.

The wolves of Ebonclaw had buried Riley once. They wouldn't get a second chance.

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[729 words]

Chapter 200

Carmen stepped back instinctively, moving to stand protectively behind Riley.

"I don't like eggs," she said calmly, her voice flat.

Based on the past, Carmen knew Riley would usually respond gently—perhaps ask what she'd prefer to eat instead.

But Riley only said, "They're in the fridge."

A short answer. But it landed like a stone in Carmen's heart.

Finished

There was no warmth in it—only detachment. And it confirmed Carmen's deepest suspicion: Riley couldn't hear her. She hadn't truly responded—she had read her lips.

Her hearing was gone.

Carmen's chest tightened with a surge of pain. If Riley had lost her hearing, it must've happened in prison... and Carmen couldn't imagine what kind of hell she must have endured inside.

Her fists clenched at her sides, nails biting into her palms. Rage boiled in her blood like wildfire.

Those who had hurt Riley—Kael Vale, Maddox, the rest of the Ebonclaw Pack—they didn't deserve mercy. They deserved to

burn.

Still holding her fury beneath the surface, Carmen moved to the fridge, retrieved some eggs, and set to work. The skillet hissed and crackled as the eggs hit the pan, releasing a rich aroma that soon filled the air.

Behind her, Riley carefully ladled thick, fragrant congee into a ceramic bowl. Her steps were quiet, but Carmen noticed the limp—Riley's gait was uneven, each movement a subtle wince.

It was like watching someone tread barefoot over broken glass. Every step made Carmen's chest ache deeper.

Then-

A shriek shattered the quiet. "You filthy bitch! What are you doing here?!"

The next instant, the ceramic bowl slipped from Riley's hands, crashing to the floor in a splatter of hot porridge and shards.

Riley gasped, stumbling back.

Carmen rushed from the kitchen, **eggs** still in hand, and what she **saw** ignited her fury.

A heavily made-up woman—her **face** twisted in hatred—**was** lunging toward Riley with **her** hand raised.

The porridge had splashed across Riley's wrist, leaving red scald marks. The pain etched across her face broke something in

Carmen.

And then—she snapped.

Carmen launched forward with speed only a she-wolf could possess. With the sizzling egg still hot from the pan, she slammed it against the woman's powdered **face**.

A scream tore from the woman's throat—shrill, feral, filled with disbelief.

Boiling yolk and oil dripped down her cheeks, melting her makeup into grotesque smears.

The woman staggered back, clawing at her **face**. Carmen didn't stop. **She** surged forward, grabbed a fistful of dyed hair, and drove her knee into the woman's ribs with deadly precision.

The woman collapsed to her knees with a thud

Carmen's grip tightened. She forced the woman's face into the ruined congee and shattered porcelain on the floor, grinding her down until the scent of blood filled the air.

3:55 PM P P.

Chapter 200

The floor beneath her reeked of dominance, violence, justice.

Finished

The woman screamed, cursed, flailed—but Carmen's stance was unmovable, her wolf raging beneath her skin, demanding retribution.

"Touch her again," she growled low, voice laced with venom, "and you'll be dining through a straw for the rest of your pathetic life."

Behind her, a man finally recovered from the shock. With fury in his eyes, he lifted a foot, aiming to kick Carmen off.

But Riley moved first.

Despite her pain, she stepped between them, raising her arm like a shield. Her voice rang out sharp and commanding: "Alpha Duskcliff—this is the Duskgrave estate. Not your territory."

The man froze. His eyes burned as he stared at Riley like she was a ghost risen from his deepest nightmares.

This was Ronan Duskcliff's father.

He and his mate had just returned from their overseas trip last night—only to learn that Lucien had thrown their beloved son into prison.

It was a humiliation they couldn't swallow.

They had rushed here at dawn, hoping to plead with Lucien for mercy.

But the last person they expected to see... was Riley.

The name alone was a wound.

She had turned their daughter, Tessa, into a vegetable. And now, she was free.

During her five years in prison, they had sent pack members to torment her, hoping to break her spirit.

Yet here she stood. Alive. Defiant.

And their daughter's blood was still on her hands.

Mrs. Duskcliff had snapped the moment she saw Riley.

But she hadn't expected Carmen.

A wild wolf with fire in her **eyes**.

Now, the mighty Duskcliff matriarch knelt in a puddle **of** steaming porridge and blood, her pride shattered, her body trembling.

And Mr. Duskcliff's murderous gaze bore into Riley, **as** though trying to resurrect the past and bury her with it again.

But this time.... Riley didn't lower her eyes.

This time... she **wasn't** alone.

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