The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 106

Practice and instinct–2

I stepped toward her slowly. “Don’t hide from me.” The words came quietly.

She went still. Her eyes lifted toward mine uncertainly while her arms remained crossed over herself.

“You don’t need to cover yourself around me,” I continued.

Silence settled between us. Then slowly, carefully, her arms lowered again. The scars across her back remained visible immediately afterward. Old whip marks crossed pale skin in uneven lines that time had faded but never fully erased. More scars rested lower along her sides, quiet reminders of everything she’d survived. I didn’t look away from any of it.

I stepped closer until almost no space remained between us. Isla’s breathing changed slightly.

“Can I kiss you?” I asked quietly.

A pause settled between us. Then she nodded once. “Yes.”

I touched her carefully first. One hand settled against her waist while the other moved gently along her face before I kissed her. This one felt different from the others. Slower. Deeper. Not desperate. Certain. She kissed me back immediately, her fingers tightening lightly against my chest while the bond warmed sharply between us. Vorak pushed heavily beneath my skin, wanting closer contact, wanting her completely against us, wanting more than restraint allowed.

‘Ours.‘

My hand tightened slightly against her waist before I forced myself to stop there. Because if I didn’t stop now I wouldn’t later.

Isla looked up at me afterward, breathing unevenly. I rested my forehead briefly against hers. “We should stop.”

Understanding crossed her face almost immediately. Not rejection. Trust. “You’re waiting for me,” she said softly.

“Yes.” I wasn’t taking that choice away from her. The bond wanted the mating. Vorak wanted the mark. But Isla mattered more than instinct.

A small breath left her before her attention shifted suddenly toward the far side of the clearing again. “The clothes,” she said quickly.

Without moving away from her completely I reached through the mind link. ‘Sera.‘ Her response came immediately. ‘Alpha King?‘ ‘Bring clothing to the eastern clearing near the lower stream for Isla and I.‘ I looked toward Isla briefly before continuing. ‘Leave them at the tree line. Don’t enter the clearing.‘ A short pause followed. Then understanding settled through the link instantly. ‘Of course.’ I ended the connection afterward.

“Sera will leave the clothes nearby,” I said calmly. “She won’t come into the clearing.”

Relief crossed her expression so quickly that the corner of my mouth almost lifted with it. Several quiet minutes passed afterward while Isla sat carefully beside the stream with my arm loosely around her waist. Cold air moved through the clearing while water rushed softly over stone nearby.

Then the mind link opened again. ‘The clothes are near the fallen cedar west of the clearing, Sera said calmly. ‘I’m gone.’ Good. I pulled back from the link before looking toward Isla again. “She left them.”

Her shoulders relaxed immediately. “Where?”

I pointed toward the western side of the clearing. “Near the fallen cedar.”

She nodded once before pulling her legs slightly closer beneath herself near the stream. “I’ll get them,” I said.

Isla looked up at me quietly afterward. Then she nodded again. I turned toward the tree line while the cold air moved softly through the clearing around us. Halfway across the clearing I felt it again. Her eyes on me. Watching every step. Trusting me enough to stay there while I walked away from her.

That affected me far more deeply than the kiss had.

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Chapter 107

What belonged to her–1

(Caius)

I found the clothes exactly where Sera said they would be. Folded neatly beside the fallen cedar without any sign she'd stayed nearby. She understood immediately what Isla needed and handled it quietly, which was exactly why I trusted her with things that required no explanation. Good.

I picked up the clothes before turning back toward the clearing again.

Isla still sat near the stream where I'd left her. Cold air moved strands of dark hair around her face while water rushed over the rocks nearby. She had her knees drawn slightly closer now, arms wrapped loosely around them while she looked toward the stream beside her. The wolf in her had settled but the stillness she carried wasn't emptiness. It was the particular quiet of someone processing something that had changed them and hadn't finished changing them yet.

Thinking again. That didn't surprise me anymore.

She looked up the second she heard me returning. Not alarmed. Looking for me. There was a difference between those two things and I had learned to read it in her. Something about that settled heavily inside my chest in a way I didn't try to name.

"I found them," I said quietly once I reached her again.

Her shoulders loosened immediately afterward. "Thank you."

I held the clothes out toward her before turning slightly away without thinking much about it. A few seconds passed quietly. Then Isla spoke behind me.

"You don't have to look away."

My attention shifted back toward her carefully. She still held the clothes against herself, but the uncertainty from earlier had eased slightly now. Not gone completely. Just quieter than before. She was looking at me with that direct expression she had, the one that had been growing steadier since the shack.

"I don't want you uncomfortable," I said.

A soft breath left her. "You always do that."

"What?"

"Give me a choice first."

What belonged to her–1

The words settled between us quietly. I watched her for a moment before answering honestly. "Because everyone else spent years taking choices away from you."

Something changed in her expression after that. Not shock. Not sadness either. Something deeper and more considered, the expression of someone turning a thought over and finding it was true from every angle. She looked down briefly toward the clothes in her hands before speaking again.

“No one’s ever cared about that before.”

Anger moved through me immediately at how simple those words sounded coming from her mouth. No one should’ve been able to say something like that so calmly. I kept my voice even anyway.

“I care.”

Her eyes lifted toward mine again after that. The silence between us changed slightly afterward. Softer now. Not heavy like before. She dressed near the stream while I stayed close enough that she knew I was there without making her feel watched. By the time she finished, the sun had lowered further through the trees overhead and the clearing had grown colder around us.

Isla stepped closer once she finished adjusting the long sleeves around her wrists. “These are yours,” she said quietly while looking down at the shirt she wore.

“Yes.”

“They’re too big.”

“You look fine.”

A small reaction crossed her face before disappearing again quickly. I noticed anyway. I noticed most things where she was concerned and had stopped pretending otherwise even to myself.

We sat beside the stream afterward without rushing back toward the pack house immediately. Water moved over the rocks nearby while the forest stayed quiet around us. For once, neither of us needed the silence filled. It had taken time to reach this, the particular ease of two people who had stopped performing calm for each other and simply existed in it.

Isla pulled her knees slightly closer while staring toward the stream again. “It didn’t hurt the same way this time,” she admitted quietly after a while.

I looked toward her. “You were calmer,” I said.

She nodded once slowly. “I wasn’t scared of it anymore.” She said it like she was still getting used to the fact of it, testing how it sounded from the outside. Something about those words settled heavily inside my chest. That was exactly what I wanted for her.

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Chapter 108

What belonged to her–2

“I liked running,” she admitted softly after another moment.

That pulled a quiet reaction out of me immediately. “You were fast.”

A faint smile touched her mouth before disappearing again. “You kept catching up to me.”

“I was letting you lead.”

That earned another small reaction from her. “You’re impossible.”

“I’ve been called worse.”

A soft sound left her then. Not quite laughter, but close enough that something warmer settled inside my chest because of it. I wanted more of those sounds from her. More of this version of her, the one that said impossible to me without flinching and meant it as something other than a complaint.

Isla looked toward the stream again afterward. “It felt different being out there,” she said quietly. “Not trapped. Not watched.”

I stayed quiet and let her continue.

“My wolf didn’t feel angry.” Her fingers brushed lightly against the fabric around her knees. “She just wanted to run.” She paused for a moment. “I think that’s the first time I’ve wanted something without waiting for someone to take it back.”

“That’s how it should be,” I said. “That’s how it’s going to stay.”

Her attention shifted back toward me. “She trusts you.” The words were simple. Certain. Not questioning. She said them the way she said things she had already finished deciding.

Vorak reacted immediately beneath my skin at hearing it from her directly.

‘Mate.‘

I ignored him. Mostly.

“She trusts you too,” I said calmly.

A quieter expression crossed Isla's face after that before she looked away again. The forest had started growing darker around us by then while colder air moved through the clearing. Shadows stretched between the trees while the sound of the stream softened around us.

Neither of us moved to break it. The dark coming in wasn't a reason to rush.

Eventually Isla stood beside the water. "We should head back before the guards start searching the forest for us," she said.

That pulled a quieter reaction from me than before. Probably because she was right, and because there was something specific about her saying we should head back that I hadn't heard from her before. Not I should go back. We.

I stood beside her a second later. For a moment neither of us moved.

Then something brushed lightly against my hand. I looked down. Isla's fingers had slipped quietly against mine. Tentative. Careful. But there. Deliberate in the way she did everything that mattered to her, without announcement, without drama, just a decision made and carried out.

My chest tightened unexpectedly. I closed my hand around hers immediately afterward. Not trapping. Holding. She looked up at me quietly when I did it. No fear. No uncertainty. Just trust. And somehow that affected me more than the kiss had earlier, more than any of it, because she had reached for me first.

Together we started back toward the pack house through the trees, side by side while the sounds of the stream slowly disappeared behind us.

Even before we reached the main grounds again, wolves started noticing us through the trees. I felt the shift move across the territory little by little as word spread of our return. Guards straightened immediately while Ashcrest wolves lowered their heads the second Isla stepped back onto the main paths beside me.

Nobody ignored her anymore. Nobody dared to.

She stayed calm through all of it, her hand still resting quietly in mine while the territory reacted around her naturally. Not like prey returning to the pack house. Like something the wolves of Ashcrest already understood they couldn't stand above anymore.

Vorak was quiet at my side the whole way back.

Not restless. Not pushing. Just present and certain and deeply, finally still.

Chapter 109

Too far away

(Caius)

By the time Isla and I reached the pack house again, night had fully settled over Ashcrest. Torches burned along the outer paths while royal guards continued moving through the territory below. Wolves stayed quieter now than they had earlier, careful around the guards stationed throughout the grounds.

Nobody stopped us when we entered. The halls felt calmer too. Not peaceful. Ashcrest would never become peaceful overnight after what happened here. But controlled. That mattered.

I felt Isla's hand remain in mine while we moved through the corridor together. She no longer watched the floor while walking through this place. No hesitation remained in her steps either. Good. That part of her was disappearing little by little.

The guards outside our quarters straightened immediately when they saw us approaching before stepping aside without needing instruction. Isla walked inside ahead of me while I closed the door behind us. Silence settled around us immediately afterward. Not uncomfortable. Just quieter than the territory outside.

Isla moved toward the window without speaking while I watched her carefully. Something had changed after the forest. Not only inside her. Inside the bond too. I felt it constantly now. Every movement she made pulled my attention immediately without effort. The farther she moved across the room, the more restless Vorak became beneath my skin.

'Closer.'

I ignored him. Mostly.

Isla stayed near the window several quiet moments before finally speaking. "Do you feel that?"

My attention shifted toward her immediately. "Yes."

She turned toward me slowly afterward. Silver moved briefly through her eyes again before fading. "It keeps pulling," she admitted quietly. No fear. Just awareness.

"The bond," I said.

She nodded once. I understood exactly what she meant. Vorak barely settled after the clearing. Every instinct inside him pushed toward her constantly now. Closer. Touching. Watching. Protecting.

Too far away

‘She feels too far away.’

That would become a problem quickly.

“It’s stronger now,” Isla said quietly.

“Yes.”

Silence settled briefly between us afterward. Then Isla crossed the room toward me slowly. Not hesitant. Instinctive. I felt the shift in the bond immediately the closer she got. Tension eased beneath my skin little by little until she finally stopped directly in front of me.

Better.

Her brows pulled together slightly afterward. “You felt that too.” Not a question. Fact.

“Yes.”

Something about hearing her say it affected me more than it should have. Because she wasn’t questioning herself anymore. She was learning. Fast.

Isla looked down briefly before her fingers brushed lightly against my wrist. Heat moved through the bond immediately afterward. Her breathing changed slightly. Mine nearly did too.

“The distance feels wrong,” she admitted quietly.

I understood that too well already. Even walking across the clearing earlier to retrieve clothes affected me more than it should have. Every instinct inside me noticed the separation immediately. Especially while staying inside Ashcrest. Especially while trying to maintain control around her.

Vorak pushed harder beneath my skin again.

‘Her wolf keeps reaching for us.

I ignored him more firmly this time. Mostly.

Isla’s fingers tightened slightly against my wrist afterward before releasing again. “Is it supposed to happen this fast?”

“Probably not.”

That pulled her attention fully back toward me. “Probably?”

“Celestial wolves aren’t exactly common,” I answered calmly.

A softer reaction crossed her face briefly before disappearing again. “You really don’t know.”

© Too far away

“No,” I admitted.

That seemed to settle something inside her strangely enough. Maybe because uncertainty sounded more honest than pretending we understood everything already. Silence settled quietly afterward.

Then Isla moved away toward the table near the wall where food had already been left earlier. The movement should’ve been ordinary. It wasn’t. My attention followed her immediately without permission from me at all. The bond reacted every time she moved farther away across the room.

Isla noticed too. “You keep watching me.” The words carried quiet amusement now. Not discomfort.

“That’s because Vorak won’t stop reacting every time you move.”

A softer expression crossed her face afterward. “Vaela does the same thing.”

That changed things immediately. “How strongly?”

Isla stayed quiet briefly before answering honestly. “She notices where he is constantly.” Her fingers tightened slightly around the cup she picked up afterward. “And she dislikes distance.”

Vorak agreed immediately beneath my skin.

‘Her wolf settles easier near us.‘

I ignored him. Less successfully this time.

Isla leaned back lightly against the edge of the table afterward while watching me carefully. “So what happens now?”

Good question. Because the honest answer was simple. Instinct wanted me closer to her constantly now. Not only physically. Everything in the bond kept pulling tighter every hour. And the worst part was that Isla felt it too.

I crossed the room toward her slowly afterward before stopping directly in front of her again. Closer. Better. Her breathing changed slightly the second the distance disappeared. Mine nearly did too.

“We figure it out,” I answered quietly.

Her eyes searched mine for several moments afterward. Then her fingers brushed lightly against my hand again. Instinctive. Like she wanted contact without fully realizing she was reaching for it first.

Too far away

Vorak noticed immediately.

‘She reaches for us before thinking now.’

I ignored him completely that time. Barely.

Isla looked down briefly afterward before speaking again. “It feels calmer near you.” The words settled heavily inside my chest. Because I understood exactly what she meant. Everything inside me settled more easily around her too. The constant tension beneath my skin eased the second she touched me. Distance felt wrong now in a way I couldn’t explain logically anymore.

Vaela and Vorak were pulling toward each other constantly beneath the surface. And we were getting dragged with them.

Her fingers remained lightly against mine afterward while silence settled around us again. Not awkward. Not uncertain. Heavy in a completely different way now. The bond warmed steadily between us while Isla kept looking at me like she was still trying to understand what was happening between us.

Truthfully, so was I.

Then she stepped closer again. Not even enough space remained between us now for cold air to pass comfortably. My attention dropped briefly toward her mouth before returning to her eyes immediately afterward.

Control. I still had it. Mostly.

But the bond noticed everything now. Every shift in breathing. Every glance. Every inch closer. And judging by the way Isla’s breathing changed again, she noticed it too.

Neither of us moved away.

That was the problem.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 110

Isla's fingers stayed around my wrist while the room went quiet around us. Not empty quiet. The kind that made every breath between us feel too close.

She looked up at me without lowering her eyes, and that alone did something to me I didn't have a name for. My attention dropped to her mouth for one second. She noticed. Of course she noticed. A small change crossed her face before she stepped closer, slow enough to make it worse.

Vorak pushed hard beneath my skin.

'Kiss her before I take control from you.'

My jaw tightened. Isla's hand moved from my wrist to my chest. The second she touched me, the bond pulled so hard I had to draw in a controlled breath. She felt it too. Her fingers tightened in my shirt, and her eyes stayed on mine like she was waiting. Not afraid. Not uncertain. Waiting. That was worse than fear.

I lifted my hand and brushed her hair back from her face. Her eyes closed for one short second, and she leaned into my touch before she could stop herself.

Vorak went still inside me.

'She wants us. Stop pretending you don't feel it.'

"I feel it," I muttered before I could stop myself.

Isla's eyes opened. "What?"

I should've said nothing. Instead, I looked at her mouth again. She understood. Her breathing changed, and the scent of her filled my head until the rest of the room barely existed.

I kissed her.

Slow at first. Careful. The second my mouth touched hers, Isla moved into me like she'd been waiting for me to stop holding back. Her hands slid up my chest and locked at the back of my neck. I pulled her closer, one hand at her waist, the other against the side of her face. She kissed me back harder. Not shy. Not scared. Just Isla. That nearly ruined me.

Vorak surged forward at once.

‘Now. Mate her now.‘

Her terms–1

I forced him down so hard pain moved through my skull. Isla felt the change. Her mouth parted from mine, and her hands tightened at my neck.

“Caius?”

I didn’t answer right away. I couldn’t. If I opened my mouth too soon, I wasn’t sure what would come out. Her eyes searched mine.

“He’s fighting you.”

“Yes.”

Her expression changed. Not fear. Understanding.

“What did he say?” she asked.

I breathed out through my nose. “You don’t need to know that.”

“That bad?”

“Worse.”

A faint smile touched her mouth, and somehow that made it worse again.

Vorak pushed harder.

‘Coward. Let me take over if you won’t do what she wants.’

My hand tightened at her waist before I forced it to loosen. Isla noticed that too.

“You’re really fighting him.”

“Yes.”

“Can he take over?”

“Not if I stop him.”

“And if you can’t?”

I looked at her then. Really looked. “You move away from me.”

Her smile disappeared. “No.”

“Isla.”

“No,” she said again, firmer this time. “I won’t move away because your wolf is loud.”

That shouldn’t have affected me the way it did. But it did. She stood there in front of me,

Her terms–1 wearing my clothes, looking at me like she’d already made her decision and didn’t care how badly Vorak behaved in my head.

“You don’t understand what he wants.”

“I do.”

“No, you don’t.”

Her chin lifted slightly. “Then tell me.”

Vorak went quiet again. Watching. Waiting. I hated that he wanted me to answer almost as much as she did. I looked away first.

“He wants the mark.”

Silence settled between us. Then Isla’s fingers slid slowly from the back of my neck to my shoulders.

“And you?” she asked.

I looked back at her. “I want you ready.” The answer came out rougher than I wanted. Her eyes softened, but she didn’t step back.

“I didn’t ask what you’re waiting for,” she said quietly. “I asked what you want.”

Control became harder after that. Much harder. Because she wasn’t asking like a frightened girl. She was asking like my mate. Like a Celestial wolf who already knew the answer and wanted me to say it anyway.

“I want you,” I said.

Her breath caught. Just once. But I heard it. Felt it.