The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 111

Her terms–2

Vorak pushed forward immediately.

‘She heard you. Enough waiting.‘

I caught his force before it reached my body fully, but only barely. My eyes burned again, and Isla’s gaze moved over my face. She didn’t step away. Instead, her hand lifted slowly and touched my jaw. That one touch made the fight inside me worse and easier at the same time. Worse because I wanted more. Easier because it was her.

Her thumb moved lightly along my jaw. “Then both of you should listen.”

Vorak stilled. I did too.

Isla’s eyes stayed locked on mine. “I’m not afraid of the bond,” she said. “I’m not afraid of you either.” My chest tightened. “But I don’t want to be rushed by instinct,” she continued. “Not yours. Not mine. Not his. Not Vaela’s.”

Vorak moved beneath my skin, quieter now.

‘She speaks like a queen.’

I almost answered him. Almost. Isla kept her hand on my face.

“When I choose the mark, it won’t be because the bond dragged me there,” she said. “It’ll be because I want it.”

The room went completely still around her words. Or maybe I did. Because that was the first time she’d spoken of the mark without fear. Not as something forced. Not as something taken. As something she’d choose.

I lowered my forehead to hers and closed my eyes for one second. “You’ve no idea what that does to me.”

“I think I do.”

A quiet sound left me. Not laughter. Close enough.

“You’re getting bold.”

“I think I was always bold,” she said. “They just kept me too tired to use it.”

That hit me harder than expected. My eyes opened. She didn’t look sad when she said it. She looked sure. Strong. More herself than I’d ever seen her.

Her terms–2

Vorak spoke again, lower this time.

‘She isn’t fragile.‘

No. She wasn’t. I’d known that already, but hearing my wolf say it changed something. I lifted my hand and covered hers where it rested against my jaw.

“No,” I said quietly. “She isn’t.”

Isla’s eyes narrowed slightly. “Are you talking to him or me?”

“Both.”

That finally pulled a real smile from her. Small. Quick. Enough.

Then she leaned up and kissed me again. She started it this time. That mattered. I let her set the pace, even when Vorak tried to push for more. Her mouth moved over mine with growing confidence, and her hands stayed against me like she had no intention of letting me retreat into control again.

I didn’t pull away right away. I let myself have a few seconds. Just a few. Then a few became more. My hand moved to her back, keeping her close while the bond tightened between us. Isla made a quiet sound into the kiss, and Vorak nearly tore through my restraint.

‘Move aside.‘

‘No.‘ This time I answered him fully. He slammed against my control, and my body tensed so hard Isla broke the kiss herself.

Her hand pressed against my chest. “Caius.”

I stepped back one pace. Only one. My breathing was rougher now, and I hated that she could hear it.

“He pushed.”

“I know.”

“You felt it?”

“Yes.”

Her answer was calm. Too calm for what had just happened inside me. I looked at her carefully.

“How much can you feel?”

Hm terms–2

“Enough.”

That answer did nothing good to my control. Isla’s hand remained against my chest, not letting me withdraw completely.

“Vaela didn’t like it.”

That got my attention. “She didn’t?”

“No.” Isla’s eyes held mine. “She said if Vorak wants me, he needs to learn patience.”

For one breath, I forgot the problem entirely. Then I smiled.

Vorak gave a low growl beneath my skin.

Isla’s fingers relaxed against my chest. “Maybe they need rules too.”

“They’re wolves.”

“So?”

I looked at her. She looked back without blinking. Of course. Of course my mate would try to put rules on ancient mating instincts five minutes after realizing she could understand them better.

“You want to make rules for Vorak?”

“Yes.”

Vorak went very still.

‘No.‘

I laughed out loud. Isla’s brows lifted slightly. “He didn’t like that.”

“No,” I said. “He didn’t.”

“Good.”

That one word was calm enough to almost undo me. She stepped back then, not because she was running, but because she chose to. The bond pulled immediately, but this time I didn’t follow. I let her move.

Vorak pushed once. I held. Isla noticed. Approval warmed through the bond before I could question it. Not from Vorak. From her.

She sat down again and looked up at me. “First rule,” she said. “No taking over.”

Her terms–2

Vorak growled. I ignored it because for once I agreed with her completely.

“Second?” I asked.

Her gaze moved over me slowly. “No touching unless I choose it too.”

“Fair.”

Her mouth curved slightly. “And third.”

I waited. She looked me straight in the eyes. “If I kiss you first, you’re allowed to kiss me back.”

Control. Gone for a second. Completely gone.

Vorak surged with satisfaction.

‘She’s perfect.’

This time I didn’t argue. I only looked at Isla while she sat there watching me with that quiet confidence growing stronger every minute. The bond still pulled. Vorak still wanted more. My body still wanted to close the distance again. But something had shifted. Not weaker. Better.

Because for the first time, the restraint between us didn’t feel like denial.

It felt like choice.

Princess Gody princess jody

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The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 112

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She chose it

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 113

She chose it

(Caius)

She'd set three rules and looked at me like she was daring me to argue with any of them. I hadn't. Not because I couldn't find the words, but because she was right and we both knew it, and arguing with something true wasn't something I did when I could help it. Vorak had gone unusually quiet after the third rule, the kind of quiet that meant he was thinking rather than pushing, which was different enough from his usual behavior that I noticed it immediately. That alone told me more about where we were than anything else had.

I pulled the chair from beside the table and sat down across from her, not crowding her, not retreating either. She'd given me permission to kiss her back if she started it, which meant she'd already decided something that she hadn't put into full words yet. I wasn't going to reach past what she'd offered. I'd learned enough about Isla to understand that what she offered freely was worth infinitely more than anything I could take, and I wasn't interested in anything that wasn't freely given.

She watched me sit down with that particular attention she had. "You're not going to say anything about the rules," she said. It wasn't a question, it was a check, the same way she checked most things, looking for the gap between what I said and what I intended.

"No," I said. "They're fair." She held that for a moment and then looked away toward the window, which had gone dark with the night outside Ashcrest. The territory was quieter now than it had been during the day, the particular quiet of a place that understood something had ended and hadn't yet worked out what came next.

Vorak moved beneath my skin again, slower this time. 'She's decided something.' I didn't answer him right away because I'd noticed the same thing and hadn't worked out what it was yet.

She was sitting across from me with her hands loose in her lap and her face more open than it had been all evening. It wasn't the openness of someone who'd stopped bracing.

It was the openness of someone who'd made a decision and put the weight down.

I understood then why Vorak had gone quiet.

Not because he was calmer.

Because he felt the difference in her too.

Isla looked toward the fire for a moment before her attention returned to me again. "I have something else I want to discuss with you."

She chose it

I kept my attention on her quietly afterward. "What is it?"

A small silence followed before she answered.

"I don't want to keep sleeping in a different room."

That pulled my full attention toward her immediately.

Isla held my gaze this time instead of looking away after saying it. There was no uncertainty in her expression either. She looked like someone who'd already made the decision before bringing it to me.

Vorak stirred beneath my skin at once.

'Yes.'

"You're sure?" I asked quietly.

"Yes."

The answer came without hesitation.

Isla's fingers rested loosely together in her lap while she continued looking directly at me.

"I'm not saying it because of the bond." Her voice stayed calm. "And I'm not saying it because

Vaela wants it."

I stayed quiet and let her continue.

"It's just that I want to know what it feels like to sleep beside my mate."

That settled heavily inside my chest.

Not because she sounded nervous.

Because she didn't.

She sounded certain.

Open.

Like she'd finally stopped denying herself things she wanted simply because she was afraid of them.

Vorak noticed it too.

'She chose us.'

She chose it

I leaned back slightly in the chair afterward while keeping my eyes on her. "You realize that's a dangerous thing to say to someone already struggling with control around you."

A softer reaction crossed her face briefly before disappearing again.

"I know."

The honesty in that answer nearly destroyed what little restraint I still had left.

The room quieted afterward while the fire burned steadily beside us.

Then Isla spoke again.

"I'm not afraid of sleeping beside you, Caius."

Something about hearing her say it that plainly affected me more than the kisses earlier ever had.

Because she meant it.

Completely.

I looked at her for a long moment before I answered. Not because I needed time to decide. Because she deserved a response that matched what she'd just said and I wasn't going to rush it.

"Alright," I said.

Something shifted in her expression. Not surprise exactly. The particular look of someone who had prepared for resistance and didn't get it.

"You should know," I said, "that the bond doesn't care about which side of the bed either of us starts on."

She looked at me steadily. "I know."

"By morning we'll be closer than we started."

"I know that too," she said. "That's not what concerns me."

"What concerns you?"

"Nothing," she said. "That's the point."

That landed somewhere specific inside me. She wasn't telling me she had no concerns because she was suppressing them. She was telling me she'd thought it through and arrived at the other side of them and what she found there was nothing to be afraid of.

She chose it

Vorak went very still. 'She's ready.' I didn't answer him because I needed to stay exactly where I was and his commentary wasn't helping.

"Vorak will be difficult to manage," I said.

"Vaela will keep him in line," she said.

I almost smiled at that. Almost. "You have a lot of confidence in a wolf you've only recently met."

"She's me," Isla said simply. "She'll manage."

The fire had burned down to almost nothing beside us and the room had gone quieter than it had been all evening and outside Ashcrest was settling into the particular dark that came before something was finally over.

I stood from the chair and held out my hand.

She looked at it for a moment. Then she took it.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 114

Curiosity–1

(Caius)

The corridor was quiet at this hour. She walked beside me without hesitation and I matched her pace and said nothing because there was nothing that needed saying. The decision had been made and the words had been said and what came next was simply the walking toward it, which was sometimes the most important part of anything. Vorak was close to the surface and not doing a particularly good job of hiding it but he was holding and so was I.

The firelight from the lower hall stretched across the stone beneath our feet while Ashcrest settled deeper into the night around us. Most wolves had already returned to their quarters by now and the few guards still stationed through the corridors lowered their heads the second they saw us approaching. Isla noticed it. I felt the shift in her attention every time another wolf stepped aside for her without hesitation.

She stayed calm through all of it.

Not distant.

Just certain.

Vorak moved beneath my skin again.

‘I’m proud of her.’

The words caught me off guard enough that I nearly looked away from Isla entirely.

Because he meant it.

Not as her mate.

As a wolf watching another wolf finally stand fully inside herself.

We reached the door to my quarters a few moments later and I felt Isla pause beside me once I opened it. Not uncertainty. Awareness maybe. The understanding that this moment mattered more than either of us was putting into words.

I looked toward her quietly afterward.

“You can still change your mind.”

Her eyes lifted toward mine immediately.

“I know.”

Curiosity–1

The answer came calmly.

Then she stepped past me and entered the room first.

The door shut softly behind us once we stepped inside my quarters. Isla walked further into the room while I stayed near the entrance for one extra second watching her quietly. She looked entirely too natural standing there now.

Vorak noticed too.

‘She’s already treating this like home.’

That settled somewhere heavier inside me than it should have.

Not because of the room itself.

This place was temporary. Ashcrest still had unfinished business buried inside its walls and once that was dealt with we’d return to Wraithborne where she actually belonged beside me.

Isla turned toward me afterward once she noticed I hadn’t moved.

“What?”

“You look comfortable here.”

A small pause followed.

“I think I’m comfortable because you’re here,” she said quietly.

That affected me more than it should have.

Not because she sounded emotional saying it.

Because she didn’t.

She sounded certain.

I crossed further into the room afterward before stopping near her again.

Close enough.

Better.

Vorak settled slightly beneath my skin immediately afterward.

‘She keeps choosing us without hesitation now.’

Yes.

She did.

I looked at her for a moment without saying anything. She was standing in the middle of the room with her arms loose at her sides and her chin up and her eyes on mine and there was nothing in her posture that was waiting for permission or approval. She wasn’t performing comfort. She simply was comfortable and the difference between those two things was something I’d watched develop over time and still found myself noticing every time I saw it.

She moved toward the bed without waiting for me to direct anything. She sat on the far side and pulled the cover back and looked at me across the room with that direct look she had, the one that had been getting steadier for a while now. “You’re still standing there,” she said. Not a complaint. An observation. The tone she used when she’d already settled something in her own mind and was waiting for everyone else to arrive at the same place.

I crossed to my side and sat down and she lay back and I did the same and the room settled around us. The fire in the hearth was lower than it had been when we came in but it was still enough to keep the room warm and the light from it moved across the ceiling in a way that had no urgency in it. Vorak was present and loud and doing his best and I left him to it because fighting him in this particular moment was a waste of energy I didn’t have to spare.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 115

Curiosity–2

“Vaela is close,” Isla said after a while. Not to fill the silence. Just as information, the way she offered things she thought I’d want to know. “I can feel her more clearly when we’re like this.”

“Like what?” I asked.

“Near you,” she said. “She responds to it.”

I understood that. Vorak responded to it too, had been responding to it since the moment Isla stepped into this room, but I wasn't going to say that out loud because some things were better left as understood rather than confirmed. She already knew. She'd known for a while now what effect she had and she'd stopped pretending she didn't, which was one of the changes I'd noticed most clearly without being able to name it precisely until it was already there.

Her attention stayed on me quietly afterward while the room settled deeper into silence around us. The fire had burned lower now and the warmth beneath the blanket mixed badly with the bond already reacting to every inch separating us.

Or not separating us.

Isla shifted slightly closer again until her shoulder rested fully against my arm this time. The movement looked absentminded. It absolutely wasn't helping me.

I exhaled slowly through my nose afterward while staring up toward the ceiling.

"You're tense again," she murmured softly.

"Yes."

No point denying it anymore.

A quieter silence settled afterward before Isla spoke again.

"Can I ask you something?"

That pulled my attention toward her immediately.

"You can ask."

A small pause followed while she studied my face carefully like she was deciding whether to say the thought aloud or leave it alone.

Then she did the exact opposite of leaving it alone.

"What would it be like," she asked quietly, "to have sex with the Alpha King?"

I choked.

Actually choked.

The reaction hit hard enough that I turned my head away briefly while coughing once into my fist. Isla stared at me for half a second before the faintest reaction crossed her face afterward.

Not embarrassment.

Surprise.

“You weren’t supposed to inhale your own air wrong,” she said.

I looked back toward her slowly afterward.

“That,” I said carefully, “is what you’re asking me while we’re already struggling through this bond?”

She blinked once.

“Yes.”

The honesty in that answer nearly made the situation worse.

I stared at her quietly afterward while she stayed completely calm beside me like she hadn’t just nearly stopped my lungs from functioning properly.

“Isla.”

“What?” she asked softly. “I was curious.”

Curious.

Of course she was.

I dragged one hand slowly down my face afterward before looking back toward the ceiling again.

“You ask terrifying questions very casually.”

That finally pulled the smallest hint of amusement from her.

“I think you’re exaggerating.”

“No,” I said immediately. “I absolutely am not.”

Curiosity–2

A softer silence followed afterward while she continued watching me entirely too closely beside me.

Then finally she spoke again.

“You don’t have to answer if you don’t want to.”

That should’ve made things easier.

Unfortunately, it didn’t.

Because now I was thinking about it. About her asking me that while lying beside me in my bed with the bond already reacting to every breath between us.

“You really don’t understand what that question does to me,” I muttered.

Her eyes stayed fixed on mine afterward.

“Then explain it.”

That definitely did not help.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 116

The first link–1

(Caius)

That definitely did not help.

Isla stayed beside me like she hadn’t just asked the kind of question that could ruin every bit of control I had left. Her eyes stayed on mine and the worst part was that she didn’t look embarrassed. She looked curious and that made the bond pull harder than it already had. I turned my attention back toward the ceiling for one second because looking at her wasn’t helping.

“You’re not answering,” she said.

“I noticed.”

“That means you heard me.’

“I heard you very clearly.”

She stayed quiet after that but I felt her attention remain on me. Isla had become very good at waiting when she wanted an answer and she wasn’t going to let me hide behind silence. I exhaled slowly through my nose and turned my head toward her again.

“Before I answer that, we should test something else.”

Her eyes narrowed slightly. “That sounds like you’re avoiding the question,” she said.

“It is.”

At least that made her pause. I held her gaze and didn’t soften the truth. “I’m trying not to make this harder than it already is.” Her expression changed, not with hurt, more like she was deciding whether to be annoyed or amused.

“You think practicing something else will help?”

“It might.”

“Or it gives you something else to talk about.”

“That too.”

Her mouth curved faintly but the look in her eyes stayed direct. “Caius.” The way she said my name made the bond tighten between us. “I’m not a child.”

“I know that.”

The first link–T

“Then stop treating me like one.”

The words landed exactly where she meant them to. She wasn’t wrong. Protecting her didn’t give me the right to decide which questions she was allowed to ask. I looked at her fully. “Fair.” Her eyes stayed on mine, waiting for more. “You asked because you wanted to know, not because you didn’t understand what you were asking.”

“Yes.”

She watched me for another second before giving a small nod. “Good.” Then she shifted slightly against the pillow. “Now tell me what you wanted to test.”

“The mind link.”

Her expression changed at once. “Between us?”

“Yes.”

She didn’t answer immediately and I could feel her attention move inward for a moment. The bond warmed between us, enough to tell me Vaela was listening too. Isla felt it as well. Her fingers tightened slightly against the blanket.

“You think we can do that already?”

“I think we might be able to do part of it.”

“Because you accepted me?”

“Because you’re a Celestial wolf,” I said. “The last recorded one was three hundred years ago and nobody fully understood what that meant for a mate bond. The ordinary rules don’t apply to you the way they apply to everyone else. The bond between us is developing faster than it should and I think your wolf is the reason for it.” I paused. “I didn’t expect this to be possible before the mark. But Vaela is not an ordinary wolf and that changes things.”

She was quiet for a moment taking that in. “So this is because of what I am.”

“Yes,” I said. “And because of what we are together.”

She held that for a moment before continuing. “But I’m not marked.”

“No.”

“So it still shouldn’t be complete.”

“It shouldn’t,” I said. “Which is why we go carefully.”

I shifted slightly onto my side so I could face her more directly. “If the link is already opening

The first link–1 it’s better to understand it before it happens by accident. Especially with your wolf newly returned to you.” Her expression turned more serious at that. “The wolfsbane didn’t only weaken your body, Isla. It affected the connection between you, Vaela, and anything that should’ve linked naturally through pack or mate bonds. If we push too hard it could strain you. You might get headaches, dizziness, pressure behind your eyes, or Vaela might pull back because the link feels too much too quickly.”

A small silence followed.

Then Isla nodded once. “So we go slowly.”

“Yes.”

“But not because you think I can’t handle it.”

“No,” I said. “Because I want you to learn how to control it before it controls you.”

The first link–2

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 117

The first link–2

That seemed to satisfy her more than the rest had. She settled back against the pillow but her eyes didn't leave mine. "Fine." Then her mouth lifted slightly. "But I still know you're using this to avoid answering me."

"I never said I wasn't."

"No," she said. "You were honest about that part."

"Don't force it," I told her. "Think my name but don't push the words. Let them move through the bond instead."

"That sounds vague."

"It is."

Her lips curved slightly. "Very helpful."

"It'll make sense once you feel it."

The room settled around us and I felt her focus shift inward, careful at first, then stronger. The bond responded immediately but no words came through. Her expression shifted with concentration.

"Don't fight it," I said quietly.

"I'm not."

"You are."

"You can't see inside my head," she said.

"No, but I can feel you trying to shove the words through the bond like you're ordering them across a battlefield."

That earned a look from her. I held her gaze without apology. "Try again," I said. "Softer this time."

This time her breathing slowed more naturally and I felt Vaela move beneath the surface of the bond, watchful but not resisting. A moment passed. Then warmth moved through the bond, followed by something faint and unfinished. Not a word yet. The shape of one. My name, almost there, but not fully formed.

“I felt something,” she said.

The first link–2

“So did I.”

Her eyes sharpened immediately. “You did?”

“Yes.”

That pleased her more than she tried to show. The bond carried a small burst of satisfaction from her before she could hide it.

“Again,” she said.

“You need a moment first.”

“I don’t.”

“Isla.”

“Caius.”

I studied her for a second before nodding once. “Fine. Again, but don’t push harder because it almost worked.”

She gave me a look that said she had already planned to do exactly that. “I mean it,” I said.

“I heard you.”

“Then listen.”

This time the bond answered faster. Her focus came through warmer, clearer, more controlled. I felt the edge of my name before I heard it. Then her voice moved through my mind, quiet but unmistakable.

‘Caius.’

My entire body went still.

She felt it land. The bond confirmed it between us instantly and her expression shifted with something that was more than satisfaction. Not surprise. Recognition. Like she'd known it was possible and feeling it confirmed something she'd already decided was true.

"It felt different," she said quietly.

"How?"

She was quiet for a second. "Closer." Then her eyes returned to mine. "Not louder. Just closer."

The link stayed open between us for a few seconds afterward, fragile but real. I could feel the

The first link 2 edge of her thoughts, not the words themselves, but the emotion beneath them. Curiosity. Pride. A little irritation too, still sitting there from earlier.

"You're still annoyed with me," I said.

Her brows lifted. "You felt that?"

"Yes."

"Good."

I stared at her. She looked back calmly. "Then you know I haven't forgotten the question."

The bond warmed again and this time I heard her before she spoke aloud.

'You can't avoid me forever.'

My control slipped for one second. Not enough to move. Enough to feel. Isla noticed immediately and her expression shifted with quiet triumph. She had meant to send that one. She knew exactly what she'd done.

I looked at her for a long moment before answering through the link.

'I know.'

Her lips parted slightly.

The link remained between us, thin and new, but alive. Neither of us moved away.

Then she smiled faintly.

"Good," she said aloud. "Now we're getting somewhere."

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 118

The answer she wanted

(Caius)

The link stayed between us for a few seconds longer before it faded into the background. Not gone. Just quiet enough that the room felt like ours again instead of something new pressing between us.

Isla didn't look away from me after that.

She didn't smile this time either.

That told me she wasn't trying to play with the moment anymore.

She wanted the answer.

"Caius," she said quietly.

I looked at her.

"Don't use the link for this."

That made something inside me still.

She held my gaze with both hands resting above the blanket now, no hesitation in her face. "I want you to answer me out loud."

I understood then.

This wasn't curiosity anymore.

Not only that.

This was her asking to be treated like someone who could hear the truth without being protected from it.

I turned fully toward her. "Alright."

Her eyes stayed on mine. "Then answer me."

The room felt too quiet after that.

Not empty.

Waiting.

I looked at her for a long moment before speaking.

“You asked what it would be like to have sex with the Alpha King,” I said.

Her breathing changed slightly, but she didn’t lower her eyes.

“Yes.”

“It wouldn’t be about the title,” I said. “Not with you.”

She listened without interrupting.

“It wouldn’t be about power either,” I continued. “Not the kind others think of when they hear my name.”

Her fingers shifted once against the blanket.

“With you, it would be about trust,” I said. “Because the bond would leave very little room for pretending. I’d know when you wanted me closer. I’d know when something was too much. I’d know when you were choosing me and when you needed me to stop.”

Her face changed then.

Not with fear.

With understanding.

That made the answer harder to continue, not easier. Fear would have given me something to step back from. Fear would have let me close the subject and tell myself I was protecting her.

But she wasn’t afraid.

She was listening.

That left me with nothing to hide behind except my own restraint, and even that felt thinner than it had a few minutes ago. Isla had asked for the truth and stayed steady when I gave her part of it.

I had no right to give her less than the rest.

“And I would stop,” I said. “Every time.”

She was quiet for a moment.

I let the silence stay.

Not because I wanted distance from her, but because some answers needed room after they were spoken. I could feel the weight of what I had said sitting between us, not as a warning,

The answer she wanted but as a promise I meant fully.

If she ever gave herself to me that way, I would carry every part of that choice carefully.

Not like something fragile.

Like something trusted.

That was different.

And maybe that was what I needed to understand most. She wasn’t asking me to protect her from wanting. She was asking me to respect it.

Then she asked, “Is that what you’re afraid of?”

“No.”

“What are you afraid of?”

I held her gaze and answered before I could make it sound easier.

“That once I know you want me, I won’t want to let the moment end.”

Her lips parted slightly.

I kept going because she had asked for the truth and I wasn’t going to give her half of it.

“I’m not afraid of hurting you because I don’t trust myself,” I said. “I’m afraid because I know exactly how much I want you. I know how strong the bond is already. I know what Vorak wants, and I know what I want.”

Her voice came quieter. “And what do you want?”

“You.”

The word left me before I could dress it up.

Her eyes stayed on mine.

“But not because you’re mine to take,” I said. “Because you’d be choosing to give yourself to

Isla stayed still for a few seconds.

Then she nodded once, slowly.

“That’s the answer I wanted.”

The answer she wanted

I didn’t move.

She looked down at the blanket between us, then back at me. “Not because I wanted you to say something pretty.”

“I know.”

“Because I needed to know if you saw me as someone who could choose that for herself.”

That landed harder than I expected.

I looked at her and understood exactly why she had pushed.

This was never only about sex.

It was about choice.

Her choice.

Her body.

Her mate.

Her right to ask and be answered.

“I do,” I said.

She watched me carefully.

“I see you,” I continued. “Not as fragile. Not as someone who needs every hard thing hidden from her. As my mate.”

Her expression shifted.

Softened, but not weakly.

Stronger somehow.

“Good,” she said.

That one word settled between us.

Then she lay back again, but she didn’t turn away from me.

“I’m not asking for tonight,” she said.

“I know.”

“I’m asking because one day I might want it.”

The answer she wanted

My control went very still.

She held my gaze.

“And when I do,” she said, “I don’t want you deciding I’m too delicate to know what I’m asking for.”

I looked at her for a long moment.

Then I nodded once.

“I won’t.”

Her eyes searched mine, and whatever she found there seemed to satisfy her.

“Good,” she said again, softer this time.

The room settled after that.

The question was no longer sitting between us unanswered.

It had changed into something else.

A promise maybe.

Not of what would happen tonight.

But of how it would happen when the time came.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 119

What remains is hers

(Caius)

I stayed awake longer than she did.

Not because I couldn't sleep, but because my mind had already moved past the room and into the morning waiting beyond it. Isla's breathing had evened out beside me, one hand still resting close enough to mine that the bond knew exactly where she was. The question between us had been answered, but Ashcrest still had one last thing to give her before I took her home.

Closure.

Not the kind others liked to name for comfort. Not the kind that came with apologies or tears or people suddenly understanding the damage after consequences had already found them. Isla didn't need them to become better in front of her. She needed to stand before them once more and let them see what they had tried to bury.

Vorak had gone unusually still inside me.

Not the restless energy he carried when something was unresolved. The settled quiet of a wolf who understood what the morning held and had decided patience was the right answer for once. I appreciated that more than I'd have admitted. He'd been loud enough through everything else. Tonight he simply let the room be what it was.

I looked at the ceiling and let my mind work through what remained.

After today the exiles would be escorted to the border. No delays. No quiet adjustments made later when attention had moved elsewhere. Rodan and Maren would leave Ashcrest land before the sun went down and they would not return. Derek and Helene too. Those serving time would be transferred to the correctional compound before we rode out. Ashcrest itself would be formally dissolved and reconstituted under crown supervision with new leadership drawn from the members I'd already identified as non complicit.

All of it today.

All of it before I took her home.

Isla shifted slightly beside me.

Still asleep. Moving the way she moved in sleep now, toward me without deciding to, the bond doing what bonds did when two people stopped fighting what they already were to each other. My hand moved once without thought, close enough that she settled again.

What Temains is hers

I thought about what today meant for her.

Not what it meant for Ashcrest. Not what it meant for the pack or the record or the new structure that would replace the old one. What it meant for the woman lying beside me who had grown up on this land and survived it and come back to it as something it hadn't expected and couldn't contain.

She was going to stand in that hall and speak.

Not about what had been done to her. She'd already told me that wasn't what she intended. She wanted to speak about what Ashcrest was now, about what it would never be again, about the choice sitting in front of every wolf still standing on this land. That was the kind of thing that came from someone who had already finished grieving what they lost and had moved into something steadier on the other side of it.

That steadiness was real.

I'd felt it in the way she'd moved through the last days. In the way she handled the grounds, the holding chambers, the pack submitting around her without command. In the way she'd sat across from me and set three rules and held my gaze while she did it. In the way she'd asked for the honest answer and received it without flinching and then lay down beside me in the dark and let the bond close the distance between us while she slept.

She wasn't carrying Ashcrest the way she'd carried it before.

It was still in her. It would always be in her in some form. But it no longer had its hands around her. She'd come back here and taken something from this place that it had never intended to give her and she was leaving with it whether Ashcrest wanted that or not.

Vorak stirred inside me.

'One more morning,' he said.

'Yes,' I said.

'Then home,' he said.

'Then home,' I said.

He settled again and I let the quiet return.

Outside Ashcrest was still. The territory moved through the last hours before dawn in the particular way places moved when something significant was ending inside their walls. I could feel it through the bond with the land, not dramatic, not loud, just a shift in the quality of the air that told me everything that needed to happen here was nearly finished.

What remains is hers

Isla's hand had found my arm at some point without her knowing it.

I looked at it for a moment and then looked back at the ceiling.

She was going back to Wraithbone as herself.

Not as the girl this pack had decided she was. Not as someone who had survived and been carried and given safety and slowly learned to trust it. As a Celestial wolf who had walked back into the worst version of her life and stood inside it as something the people here had never imagined she could be. As someone who had made her own choices every step of the way and hadn't looked to me to make them for her.

That mattered more than I could have explained to anyone who hadn't watched it happen.

The bond warmed between us and I let it.

The morning would come when it came and she would stand in that hall and say what needed to be said and Ashcrest would hear it and then it would be finished and I would take her home and none of this would follow us out of this territory.

There was nothing left to plan.

Everything that could be prepared had been prepared. Every detail that required my attention had received it. The morning would unfold the way mornings unfolded when the groundwork had been laid properly, without surprise, without gaps, without anyone in that hall finding an opening that hadn't already been closed. What remained wasn't mine to control and I didn't want to control it. It was hers. It had always been hers. I was simply the man who had made sure nothing stood between her and it.

Outside Ashcrest waited.

It had no idea what was coming.

LUCK

Chapter 120

Before we leave–1

(Isla)

The hall was full when we walked in.

Every wolf on the land the way I'd asked for. Every rank, every household, every person who had ever lived on this territory and made their choices about what they saw and what they ignored. They filled the space from wall to wall and when the doors opened every head turned toward us and the silence that followed wasn't the kind that came from discipline.

It was the kind that came from fear.

I felt it before I saw it. Vaela moved beneath my skin, quiet and certain, and my senses spread through the room the way they did now without me asking them to. Fear in layers, different in each wolf, shaped by what they'd done and what they'd allowed. Guilt in the front rows. Shame further back. A few faces near the far wall that carried something closer to relief, the wolves who hadn't been named, who had done less than the others or nothing at all, waiting to understand what this morning meant for them.

I let them wait a moment longer.

Caius walked beside me and stopped when I stopped. He didn't position himself in front of me or signal to the room on my behalf. He simply stood where he always stood, close enough that I felt him through the bond, far enough that the space in front of me was entirely mine.

I looked at the pack.

They looked back.

My whole life I had kept my eyes down in rooms like this one. I'd learned that looking too directly at the wrong person cost something I couldn't afford to lose. I'd learned to make myself invisible inside spaces that were full of people who had already decided what I was.

I wasn't doing that anymore.

I let my gaze move across the room slowly.

Not searching. Not avoiding. Just looking the way I looked at things now, directly and without apology, letting each face register before moving to the next. Some of them held

my gaze for a moment before dropping it. Most didn't manage even that. The ones who looked away fastest were usually the ones who had the most reason to.

I'd spent twenty years in this pack without anyone in it ever looking at me like I was worth seeing.

Now not one of them could hold my eyes.

Vaela moved through me again, slow and warm, and I felt the room respond to it the way the room had been responding to her since the shift. Small adjustments. Bodies pulling slightly inward. Wolves who hadn't lowered their heads yet finding reasons to look at the floor. It wasn't fear of me exactly. It was something older than fear, the particular response of wolves whose instincts recognized something their minds hadn't caught up to yet.

I let it settle before I spoke.

"I'm not here to remind you of what was done to me," I said.

My voice carried through the hall without effort. That still surprised me sometimes, the way sound moved differently now, as if Vaela understood that words spoken in this body were meant to reach people and made sure they did.

"You already know what was done," I continued. "It's in the record. Every charge. Every name. Every year it was allowed to continue." I looked across the front rows. "That part is finished."

Nobody moved.

"What isn't finished is what comes next," I said. "And that's why I'm standing here."

I let that land before I continued.

"Ashcrest is going to be rebuilt," I said. "Not because it deserves to be. Because the wolves still standing on this land deserve something worth living inside." I looked at the faces in the middle rows, the ones who hadn't been named but hadn't stopped anything either. "That includes you. Every one of you who stood by and called your silence neutrality."

A few heads dropped.

I didn't soften it.

"Silence was never neutral here," I said. "You understood that then and you understand it now. The only question left is what you do with that understanding going forward."

The room stayed quiet while I gathered the next part.

Before we leave–2