The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 201

Clean

Trust the gift

(Isla)

Caius stepped closer.

“Try something,” he said.

I looked at him.

“Don’t wait for the light,” he said. “Just reach for it.”

I looked at my hands.

“Reach how?”

“The same way you reach for Vaela,” he said. “Not by thinking about it. By knowing she’s there.”

I understood that.

I stopped waiting and simply knew.

The light answered immediately, spreading to my elbows before I even registered it had started. I watched it move without reacting to it and for the first time it didn’t fade the moment I noticed it.

It stayed.

Not long. But longer than before.

When it finally faded I looked at Caius.

“That was different,” I said.

“Yes,” he said. “That was you.”

I stood there for a moment after it faded.

“It didn’t disappear when I noticed it,” I said.

“No,” Caius said.

“Yesterday it did.”

“Yesterday you were watching for it,” he said. “Today you were just letting it be there.”

I thought about that.

“So the gift doesn’t like being watched.”

“The gift doesn’t respond well to doubt,” he said. “There’s a difference.”

I looked at my hands again.

“So every time I doubted it yesterday, I was the one making it fade.

Trust the gift

“Yes,” he said.

“Not the symbol. Not the lesson. Me.”

“Yes.”

I stood with that for a moment.

Ofaim

That was a different kind of realization than I’d expected. I’d been thinking about the gift as something I had to coax or earn, something that depended on the right conditions. But it had always been part of me. I was the condition.

I reached for it again without stepping out of the symbol.

It came immediately, spreading to my shoulders before I even thought to track how far it had gone. I kept my eyes forward instead of looking down at my hands and it kept going, moving down my back and across my chest before it settled back into whatever place it lived when it wasn’t being called.

I let out a slow breath.

“Further,” I said.

“Much further,” Caius said.

“I wasn’t looking at it.”

“No.”

“That’s why.”

“That’s part of it,” he said. “The other part is that you stopped asking whether it would come and started assuming it would.”

I looked at him. “Is there a difference?”

“All the difference,” he said.

I stepped out of the symbol and looked at it from outside again. The lines in the dirt hadn’t changed. They were the same marks I’d drawn an hour ago, imperfect copies of something in an old journal that had been waiting longer than either of us had been alive.

But something about standing outside it now felt different from standing outside it an hour ago.

I knew what it did now.

Not because Caius had explained it. Because I’d felt it.

“Can I ask you something?” I said.

“Yes.”

“The first Alpha who used these symbols,” I said. “Do you think they felt what I just felt?”

He was quiet for a moment.

Claim think they felt something,” he said. “Whether it was the same, I don’t know. You’re not the same kind of wolf they were.”

“Because I’m Celestial

“Yes.”

“So the symbols might work differently for me.”

“They already do,” he said. “No wolf in that journal’s history reached their shoulders on the second day.”

I looked at him.

“You’re sure?”

“The journal notes progress,” he said. “I read it before we started. The fastest recorded progression reached the wrists by the end of the first week.”

I looked at the symbol again.

“And I reached my shoulders on day two.”

“Yes.”

I didn’t know what to do with that information. It didn’t feel like something to celebrate exactly. More like something to sit with, to let settle before drawing any conclusions from it.

Vaela stirred inside me.

‘Don’t overthink it,’ she said.

‘I’m not,’ I said.

‘You are, she said. ‘I can tell.’

I almost smiled.

‘Fine,’ I said. ‘A little.

‘It’s faster because we’re Celestial,’ she said. ‘That’s all. it doesn’t mean anything except that we were made for this!

I held that for a moment.

Made for this.

I hadn’t thought about it that way before. I’d spent so long thinking about what had been done to me, the suppression, the wolfsbane, the years of being told there was nothing there, that I hadn’t spent much time thinking about what I’d been made for in the first place.

I looked at the symbol in the dirt.

Maybe this was part of it.

Not the only part. But part.

Trust the gift *

I stepped back inside the lines.

“One more time,” I said.

Caius didn’t tell me to stop. He just watched.

I reached for the light the same way I’d reached for it before, without waiting, without doubting, just knowing. It came immediately and this time I didn’t track it. I didn’t watch where it went or measure how far it reached. I just let it move and stayed out of its way and stood inside the symbol I’d chosen for a reason I still didn’t fully understand and let the morning be what it was around me.

When it faded I stood still for another moment before looking at Caius.

He was watching me the way he watched things that mattered to him.

His expression hadn’t changed much.

It didn’t need to.

I could see the pride in his eyes without him saying a word.

“Was that better?” I asked.

“It was.”

“How much better?”

“The light stayed with you from the moment you reached for it until you chose to let it go.”

I looked down at my hands.

“So I’m learning.”

He smiled.

“You are.”

For some reason, hearing him say it meant more than I expected.

Caius looked at the symbol before meeting my eyes again.

“We won’t train with the journal every day,” he said.

I nodded and waited for him to continue.

“There’s still sword training, pack duties, and everything else you need to learn.”

“So today isn’t the start of an everyday routine?”

He shook his head.

“No. But we’ll come back to it often.”

“Why?”

“Because your gift is part of who you are,” he said. “One day, it might make the difference between

Trust the gift protecting someone and losing them.”

Theld his gaze.

“So it’s better to learn now.”

“It is,” he said. “The more familiar your gift becomes, the more naturally it will answer you when you truly need it.”

I smiled.

“I think I’m going to be thinking about this all day.”

“I expected you would.”

He picked up the journal and closed it carefully.

The morning’s lesson was over, but I knew I’d carry it with me long after we left the training ground.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 202

Vorak doesittare

Vorak doesn’t care

(Caius)

We stopped at the edge of the training ground to let the session settle.

Isla was looking at her hands the way she'd been looking at them all morning. I was about to suggest we go inside when I heard footsteps behind us.

I turned.

Kael was crossing the training ground toward us. Twenty four, one of the stronger wolves in the rotation, broad across the shoulders, the kind of wolf who moved through the world without ever having had reason to second guess himself.

He was looking at Isla.

"Alpha King," he said with a nod toward me before his eyes moved to Isla. "Luna. I saw some of that from the far side." He nodded toward the symbol in the dirt. "That was impressive. I've never seen anything like it."

Isla looked at him. "Thank you," she said.

"How long have you been training, Luna?" he asked.

"Not long," she said.

"Could have fooled me." He smiled. "You're a natural."

He took a step closer.

I watched him do it.

Then he reached out and touched her arm.

The growl came out before I could stop it. Before I'd even finished deciding whether to stop it. Low and immediate and coming from somewhere so far underneath my usual control that by the time I registered what I'd done it was already in the air between us.

Kael's hand dropped from Isla's arm instantly.

He looked at me.

Whatever he found there made him take a step back. Then another. His chin dropped in the instinctive submission of a wolf who had just understood on a level below thought that he was standing in front of something that outranked him in every possible sense and was not, at this moment, being remotely reasonable about it.

Vorak was fully at the surface.

Not forward. Not in control. But right there, pressing against every boundary I had with the single minded focus of a wolf who had one objective and was not interested in my reservations about how to pursue it.

I took a step toward Kael.

I didn't plan to. My body simply moved and I let it move one step before I stopped myself because two steps would have been a different conversation entirely.

Kael didn't move. He couldn't. His wolf had pinned him in place the way prey went still when something larger locked eyes with it

"She is your Luna," I said. My voice came out quiet. That was worse than if it had been loud and I knew it and so did he. "You will address her as such. You will not touch her. You will not stand closer to her than you are standing to me right now. Do you understand?"

"Yes, Alpha King," he said. His voice came out even but his hands weren't.

"Good," I said. "Leave."

He left.

Not at a walk this time. Close enough to a run that the distinction was academic.

I stood where he'd been standing and breathed through it. Vorak pulled back slowly, the way he pulled back when he'd been given enough and not everything he wanted, reluctant and present and still watching the direction Kael had gone.

Isla was very quiet behind me.

I turned.

She was looking at me with an expression I couldn't read. Not fear. Not anger. Something between careful and something else I didn't have a name for yet.

"I have somewhere to be," I said.

"Caius."

"I'll be back," I said. "Go inside."

She opened her mouth.

"Please," I said.

She closed it. She looked at me for one more moment and then she turned and walked toward the pack house and I watched her go and didn't move until she was through the door.

Then I went to find Sera.

She was in the medical wing. She looked up when I came through the door and whatever she saw on my face made her set down what she was holding and gesture to the chair without a word. I sat. She looked at me for a moment.

"What happened?" she asked.

I told her. The training session. Kael crossing the ground. The compliments. The step closer. The hand on Isla's arm. The growl. The step I'd taken toward him before I stopped myself. Vorak at the surface wanting things I hadn't let him have.

Sera listened to all of it without interrupting

When I finished she was quiet for a moment,

Then she said, "You're jealous."

I looked at her.

"That's it?" I said.

"That's it," she said.

"Vorak nearly came forward over a wolf touching her arm for two seconds," I said.

"Because you're jealous," she said again. "And Vorak is territorial in a way that has no interest in being reasonable about it."

I sat with that.

"I don't get jealous," I said.

Clainy

Sera gave me the look she reserved for statements that didn't require a response because the response was self evident.

"The bond is complete," she said. "The mating is done. Vorak has what he's been waiting for and now anything that comes near Isla registers differently than it did before. A wolf touching her arm isn't just a wolf touching her arm anymore. To Vorak it's a challenge whether the wolf intended it that way or not."

“Kael wasn’t challenging anything,” I said. “He was being friendly.”

“I know,” Sera said. “Vorak doesn’t care.”

I took a step toward him,” I said.

“I know,” she said. “You told me.”

“I nearly moved on a subordinate wolf because he complimented my mate and touched her arm,” I said.

“Yes,” she said. “That’s what jealousy does.”

I looked at the wall.

“Is something wrong with the bond?” I asked. “Is this normal?”

“Completely normal,” she said. “The bond is still settling into what it is now that it’s complete. Vorak is adjusting. It’ll even out.”

“How long?”

“Depends on you,” she said. “The more you trust that Isla is yours and she knows it and no wolf is going to change that by touching her arm, the less Vorak will feel the need to remind everyone in the vicinity.”

I was quiet for a moment.

“She’s going to find this funny,” I said.

“She already does,” Sera said. “I’d put everything I own on it.”

I stood up.

“Go apologize to Kael,” she said. “And maybe do it before he finishes telling the entire pack what just happened on the training ground.”

The corner of my mouth moved. I didn’t let it go further than that.

Claus

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 203

Over nothing

(Isla)

I went inside the way he asked.

Not because I didn't have questions. Because I could see in his face that he needed a minute and pushing him for answers while Vorak was still that close to the surface wasn't something I wanted to do.

I went to our quarters and sat on the bed and thought about what had just happened.

Kael had touched my arm.

That was it. That was the full extent of what had occurred. A wolf who had been watching us train crossed the ground, said something kind, and touched my arm the way wolves touched each other without thinking about it. It had lasted maybe two seconds.

And Caius had growled.

Not a warning sound. Not something controlled or considered. Something that came from underneath all of his control and got out before he could do anything about it. I'd felt it in my chest before I'd heard it with my ears and for a half second I hadn't understood what I was hearing because I had never heard that sound from him before.

Then he'd taken a step toward Kael.

Just one step. But the way he'd moved, the way Vorak had been right there underneath it, had told me that one step had cost him something to keep at one.

Kael had looked like he might not recover from it for a week.

I lay back on the bed and looked at the ceiling.

Vaela stirred inside me.

'That was new,' she said.

'Yes,' I said. 'It was.'

I was still lying there when the knock came.

I sat up. "Come in."

It was one of the younger pack members, a girl whose name I'd learned two weeks ago and whose expression right now was caught somewhere between trying to be professional and failing completely.

"Luna," she said. "I just wanted to check if you needed anything."

"I'm fine," I said. "Thank you."

She nodded but didn't leave immediately. Her eyes gave her away.

"You heard," I said.

Over nothing

Her composure broke entirely. "Half the pack house heard," she said. "Kael came back through the main corridor and his hands were still shaking. Someone asked him what happened and he said the Alpha King growled at him and took a step toward him over nothing and then told him to leave."

I looked at her.

"Over nothing," I repeated.

"That's what he said," she said. "He didn't seem to understand what he'd done."

"He touched my arm," I said.

Her eyes went wide. "That's it?"

"That's it," I said.

She pressed her lips together very hard.

"You can laugh," I said.

She did. Briefly and with her hand over her mouth, but she did.

After she left I lay back on the bed and stared at the ceiling again and thought about Caius standing very still on the training ground breathing through something that had gotten out before he'd had any say in it. Then going somewhere. I didn't know where. But that was Caius. Even in the middle of something instinctive and unmanaged, he wouldn't just sit with it. He'd go looking for the explanation.

I heard his footsteps in the corridor before he reached the door.

The door opened.

He came in and stopped when he saw me lying on the bed looking at the ceiling with what was probably a very specific expression on my face.

He looked at me for a moment.

“You already know,” he said.

“Half the pack house knows,” I said.

He closed his eyes briefly.

“Kael told people his hands were still shaking,” I said.

“I know,” he said.

“He didn’t know what he’d done wrong,” I said.

“I know that too,” he said.

He crossed to the bed and sat on the edge of it and looked at his hands for a moment.

“Sera said I’m jealous,” he said.

I pressed my lips together.

“Don’t,” he said.

“I’m not doing anything,” I said.

“You’re about to find this funny.”

“I already find it funny,” I said. “I’ve been lying here finding it funny for twenty minutes.”

He looked at me. Something in his expression shifted, not quite resigned, something close to it.

“Kael wasn’t doing anything wrong,” he said. “He was just talking to you.”

“I know,” I said.

“Vorak doesn’t care about that distinction apparently.”

“Also something I gathered,” I said.

He was quiet for a moment. I sat up and looked at him properly. He wasn’t embarrassed the way I might have expected. More unsettled. Like something had happened that sat

outside the version of himself he'd built and maintained for a very long time and he wasn't sure yet what to do with it.

"Has it happened before?" I asked. "The jealousy."

"No," he said. "Not like that."

"What changed?"

"The bond is complete," he said. "Sera said Vorak is still adjusting. Any wolf near you registers differently than it used to."

"So every wolf who comes near me is going to get growled at?" I asked.

"No," he said. "It'll even out."

"When?"

"When I trust that no wolf is going to take you anywhere," he said. He said it plainly, without embarrassment, just as the fact it was.

I looked at him for a moment.

"You know that already," I said.

"Yes," he said. "Vorak is catching up."

I reached for his hand and he let me take it.

"For what it's worth," I said, "Kael is never going to touch my arm again."

"No," Caius said. "He isn't."

"The whole pack knows by now," I said.

"Sera warned me about that," he said.

"She's usually right," I said.

He didn't argue with that.

I leaned into him slightly and he put his arm around me and we sat there together in the quiet of our quarters with Wraithbone going about its day outside and nothing requiring either of us for now.

"You should apologize to Kael," I said.

“I know,” he said.

“Today,” I said.

“I know,” he said again.

I smiled against his shoulder.

“I like that it happened,” I said quietly.

He looked down at me.

“The growl,” I said. “I know you didn’t choose it. That’s why I like it.”

He was quiet for a moment.

“You’re going to remind me of this for a very long time,” he said.

“Probably,” I said.

His hands found my sides and I shrieked before I could stop myself.

“Caius.”

He didn’t stop.

“That’s not fair,” I managed between laughing and trying to get away from him, which wasn’t working because his reach was considerably longer than mine and he was using it without apology.

“You were saying?” he said.

“Nothing,” I said. “I was saying nothing.”

“I thought so.”

I finally got an arm free and pushed at him and he let me go just enough that I could sit up properly, breathing harder than I wanted to admit, hair completely undone, still laughing in a way I hadn’t quite managed to stop.

He looked at me.

The unsettled look from before was gone entirely.

“That was unfair,” I said.

“You were going to remind me of this for a very long time,” he said. “I had to do something”

Over nothing

“By tickling me,” I said.

“It worked,” he said.

I looked at him and taughed again despite myself.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 204

Better judgement

Better judgement

(Caius)

I found Kael in the eastern corridor.

He saw me coming and I watched him make the decision in real time about whether to turn and walk the other way. He decided against it, which showed better judgment than I might have credited him with twenty minutes ago on the training ground.

He stopped and faced me.

“Alpha King,” he said.

“Kael,” I said. I stopped in front of him. “What happened on the training ground wasn’t your fault.”

He looked at me carefully, the way wolves looked at things they weren’t sure were safe yet.

“I shouldn’t have touched the Luna,” he said.

“You didn’t know,” I said. “You weren’t doing anything wrong. What I did was an overreaction and I wanted you to know that directly.”

He was quiet for a moment.

“Is the Luna alright?” he asked.

“She’s fine,” I said. “She finds the whole thing funny.”

Something shifted in his expression. Not quite relief/Something adjacent to it.

“I won’t touch her again,” he said.

“I know,” I said. “But that’s not why I came to find you. I came because you deserved an explanation and an apology and I’m giving you both.”

He nodded once. “Thank you, Alpha King.”

I left him there and went to find Isla.

She was in our quarters exactly where I’d left her, sitting on the bed, and when I came through the door she looked at me with the expression she’d been wearing since the pack member had apparently delivered a full report of the morning’s events.

“How is Kael?” she asked.

“Fine,” I said. “I apologized.”

“Good,” she said. “Was it awkward?”

“Moderately,” I said.

She smiled. “Come on,” I said. “Dinner.”

She got up without argument, which told me she was hungry, and we went down to the dining room. It was Tater than the peak hour and the room was quieter than usual, a handful of wolves finishing up at the far end of the table. They glanced at us when we came in and then away again.

We sat and the food came and for a while neither of us said anything

Then Isla said, “Kael was very complimentary.”

I looked at her.

“He said I was a natural,” she said.

“I remember.” I said.

“He wasn’t wrong,” she said. I

“I know he wasn’t wrong,” I said.

“You still growled at him.”

“I’m aware,” I said.

She picked up her fork and gave her plate more attention than it needed.

“Vorak is adjusting,” I said.

“You said that already,” she said.

“It bears repeating,” I said.

She looked up at me. “I’m not complaining,” she said, “I told you I liked it.”

“You told me,” I said. “And then you told half the pack house.”

“I didn’t tell half the pack house,” she said. “Half the pack house already knew. I just confirmed the details.”

I looked at her.

She looked back with complete innocence.

“Eat your dinner,” I said.

She did, and the smile she was hiding gave up entirely about thirty seconds later.

We stayed at the table longer than we needed to. She asked about the eastern border reports I’d been working through earlier in the week. I told her what they said. She asked two questions that told me she’d been thinking about territorial politics more carefully than most wolves twice her age.

We talked about the High Council. Not strategically, just as a fact that was approaching. Less than two weeks. She wasn’t nervous and neither was I and there was something worth noting in the fact that two weeks ago both of those things would have been different.

Eventually we left and went back to our quarters.

Isla was asleep before me, which happened more often than not. I lay beside her in the dark and felt the

Claim bond between us, complete and warm and entirely without the reaching quality it had carried for so long.

Vorak was settled.

More settled than he'd been all day.

I closed my eyes.

I didn't know how long I slept before something woke me. Not a sound. Not movement. Something else, a change in the room that pulled me out of sleep before I understood what had caused it.

I opened my eyes.

Isla was floating.

Not high. A foot above the bed, maybe less, suspended in the air with her eyes closed and her hair loose around her and her hands relaxed at her sides. Entirely asleep. Entirely unaware.

I sat up slowly.

There was silver in her skin the way there sometimes was when Vaela was near the surface. Nothing in the room was producing that light.

I sat there and looked at her for a long moment.

Her breathing was even. Her face was the face she had when she was fully asleep, open in the way she only got when nothing was asking anything from her.

Vorak stirred beside me.

'Vaela,' he said. Not alarmed. Just acknowledging.

I reached through the bond carefully, not enough to pull Isla toward waking, just enough to feel what was there. Warm. Present. Completely settled, but with something underneath it that was active in a way sleep usually wasn't.

I reached out and put my hand on Isla's arm, gently. The silver in her skin shifted slightly under my hand and she drifted down, slowly and without waking, settling back onto the bed.

Her eyes didn't open.

She made a small sound and turned toward me the way she turned toward me in sleep and her breathing evened out again and Vaela's presence pulled back.

I sat there for a while longer.

Then I lay back down.

I looked at the ceiling and thought about what I'd just seen. Vaela operating at that level while Isla slept. The gift physically active without Isla directing it. The silver light present in the dark of a room where nothing should have been producing it.

If her abilities were strong enough to work without her conscious involvement, the training sessions we'd been running were showing us a fraction of what was actually there.

Ineeded to find more journals.

Vorak was quiet beside me.

'She's going to be remarkable; he said.

'She already is,' I said.

I closed my eyes.

Cloum

Tomorrow I would tell her what I'd seen. Tonight Net her sleep and let Vaela do whatever Vaela needed to do and trusted that whatever was happening in the dark of our quarters was exactly what it was supposed to be.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 205

A new discovery

(Isla)

Clann

I woke to Caius watching me.

Not the way I sometimes woke to find him already up and moving. He was still beside me, propped up slightly, studying me with an expression I couldn't read yet because I hadn't been awake long enough.

"What?" I asked.

“Something happened last night,” he said.

I blinked. “What kind of something?”

He was quiet for a moment.

“You were floating,” he said.

I stared at him.

“In your sleep,” he said. “About a foot off the bed. Vaela was close to the surface. There was silver in your skin.”

I sat up slowly.

“You’re serious,” I said.

“Yes,” he said.

My gaze dropped to my hands. They looked the same as they always did. Nothing about them suggested that I’d apparently spent part of the night floating above the bed without knowing it.

“Did I come down on my own?” I asked.

“No,” he said. “I brought you back.”

My eyes fell to my hands again.

“Did anything else happen?” I asked.

“No,” he said. “Just that.”

Just that. As if floating a foot off the bed in the middle of the night while completely asleep was a minor detail.

I reached for Vaela.

She was there immediately, warm and settled, and I felt something in her that I hadn’t felt before. Not guilt exactly. Something closer to satisfaction.

‘You knew, I said.

‘Yes, she said.

‘You didn’t stop.’

‘No, she said. ‘I didn’t want to.

‘Why?’

She was quiet for a moment.

‘Because I could,’ she said. ‘And I wanted to know how long.’ –

I sat with that for a moment.

“She did it on purpose,” I told Caius.

He met my eyes.

“I know.”

“You’re not surprised.”

“Not entirely,” he said. “Vaela has always known more than she lets on.”

My attention drifted to the ceiling.

‘How long?’ I asked her.

‘Long enough,’ she said.

‘That’s not an answer.

‘It’s the only one I have,’ she said. ‘I don’t measure time the way you do!

I turned back to Caius.

“Was it worrying?” I asked. “When you saw it.”

He thought about it before answering.

Claimi

“No,” he said. “It tells me we’ve been working with a fraction of what you’re capable of. That’s not worrying. It’s just information we didn’t have before.”

I thought about the training sessions. The symbol in the dirt. The light spreading to my shoulders and stopping there. Two days of careful work and conscious practice. Meanwhile, Vaela had apparently been doing something completely different on her own in the middle of the night without breaking a sweat.

‘Can you do it again?’ I asked her.

‘Yes, she said without hesitation.

‘Could you do it while I’m awake?”

She was quiet for a moment.

‘I don’t know, she said. ‘Last night was easier.

My attention shifted back to Calus.

CA new discovery

The conscious mind is still the limiting factor, isn’t it?” I said. “When I’m awake I’m watching the gift, reacting to it. When I’m asleep none of that is happening.”

He nodded once.

“Yes. Exactly that.”

“So the training is teaching me to get out of my own way,” I said.

“And last night showed us what’s possible when you do,” he said.

I glanced toward the window. Morning had fully arrived.

“We need those journals,” I said.

“I know,” he said. “I’m going to the library after breakfast.”

“I’m coming with you,” I said.

He raised an eyebrow.

“You said after breakfast,” I said. “So we eat first. Then we go.”

Something moved through his expression that wasn’t quite a smile but was close.

“Then we eat first,” he said.

I got up, found my clothes, and pulled them on. Vaela was warm inside me, settled and content in a way she hadn’t been yesterday.

‘You’re pleased with yourself,’ I said to her.

‘A little,’ she said.

I smiled and turned to Caius.

“Eat first,” he said.

“Then the library,” I said.

“Then the library,” he agreed.

We left our quarters together a few minutes later. My thoughts never wandered far from the library waiting somewhere ahead of us. Every step only made me more curious about what we might find there. I had a feeling this morning was about to answer at least one question.

The corridors were already filling with people starting their day. Pack members greeted us as we passed, and I returned every greeting with a smile. Caius stayed beside me without saying much. Neither of us needed words to know exactly where we were going.

The dining hall came into view a moment later. The smell of fresh bread and cooked eggs reached me before we stepped inside. More voices filled the room than yesterday, but the greetings didn’t distract me for long. My thoughts were still waiting in the library.

Caius glanced at me as we collected our breakfast.

“You’re thinking ahead again,” he said.

I smiled without denying it.

“I’m trying,” I said, “but it’s not working very well.”

He sat across from me and waited until I’d taken my first bite.

“There,” he said. “Now we’re making progress.”

I laughed.

“I thought the progress was supposed to happen in the library.”

“It will,” he said. “But you’ll learn more on a full stomach than an empty one.”

“I know you’re right,” I said.

“That doesn’t happen often,” he replied.

I smiled and shook my head.

“It happens more than you think.”

Clair

He smiled back before taking another bite of his breakfast. We ate in comfortable silence after that, and for once I made myself focus on the food instead of the questions waiting for me. By the time I finished, I was ready to leave the moment Caius stood.

Breakfast was over sooner than I expected.

I rose with him and waited while he pushed his chair back into place. Neither of us spoke as we left the dining hall. We didn’t need to. Our destination had been decided the moment he told me I’d been floating in my sleep, and now the only thing left was to see if the library held the answers we were searching for.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 206

The hidden page

(Isla)

Neither of us said much as we walked. We’d already talked through everything we knew. Now there was nothing left to do except see whether the journals knew more than we did. I hoped they did.

Caius led the way inside and closed the door behind us. For a moment, neither of us moved. The room seemed even quieter than usual, as though it understood why we’d come back. It was an odd thought, but I couldn’t get rid of it.

“I don’t even know where to begin,” I admitted.

“We’ll begin where we always‘ do,” Caius said. “One page at a time.”

Caius crossed to one of the shelves and rested his hand against a row of worn journals.

“We’ve searched a lot of these already,” I said.

“We have,” he replied. “But this library holds generations of records. We’ve barely scratched the surface.”

I looked around the room.

There were shelves I'd never paid much attention to before. Some held journals. Others held old ledgers and handwritten reports from kings, healers, and advisers who had served long before either of us had been born.

"Do you think it's here?" I asked.

"I do."

"You sound certain."

"I've learned not to believe something never existed simply because I haven't found it yet."

His answer made me smile.

"So we keep looking."

"We keep looking," he agreed.

He picked up the first journal and placed it on the table between us. I pulled out the chair beside him and opened the cover, hoping today would be the day one forgotten page finally gave us the answer we'd been searching for.

The first journal belonged to a king who had ruled more than three hundred years ago.

Most of the entries had nothing to do with gifts. They spoke of border disputes, harsh winters, poor harvests, and meetings with neighboring packs. Every now and then there was a note about a wolf whose ability had surprised the healers, but none of it sounded familiar.

I turned another page.

Then another.

Hours could disappear this feet them

"Anything? Caus asked without looking up from his own journal

Nothing yet

He nodded once

Near the middle of the journal, i found a page where the handwriting Suchdenly charged it was smalle and more hunted than the enties Sefure 6, ainust a though the writer had been afled he might forget what he been the daredord & mmedely

Carus lonker up

“It’s an account of someone the king met during heaves

‘I don’t know yet I admitted “Did something male hum stop writing diout the Kingdom kong enough to fit setjeev #shilp we will be whenshend

The wolf and authod warming No escort No pack menings. Thus whe was an ordinary rogue unt the at around har answered for the sple

I stopped

“That’s strange

Caius stood and came around the table

“What sie dies & say?

I scanned the next few tes

The big ever gives her fame,” I said. “He only cons ponded to the page arm that every

The hidde

He didn’t understand what he witnessed,” he said quietly.

“No.

“But he knew it mattered enough to write down.”

I turned the page.

The handwriting became even smaller.

I leaned closer until my face was only inches from the page. The ink had faded over the years, and some of the words had almost disappeared. Whoever had written this journal hadn’t expected it to survive for centuries. Even so, enough remained for me to follow the account.

“The traveler refused to speak of her family,” I read. “She claimed names could become chains when the wrong wolves learned them.” I paused and looked at Caius. “Why would someone hide something as simple as a name?”

“Because it wasn’t simple,” Caius said. “Keep reading.

I lowered my eyes to the page again. The king described how the traveler stayed for only three nights before disappearing before sunrise. She left no scent anyone could follow, and no warrior was able to track where she had gone. Even the scouts admitted it was as though she had never been there.

“Listen to this,” I said. “He writes that she warned him never to record certain bloodlines where anyone could find them.” I swallowed. “She believed someone was hunting them.”

Caius was silent for a long moment. His eyes stayed on the page as though he was trying to remember something he’d heard years ago. When he finally spoke, his voice was quieter than before.

“Turn the page.”

I did exactly that. The next page wasn’t another journal entry. Folded into the binding was a single sheet. that looked older than the journal itself. Someone had tucked it away so carefully that it had remained hidden all this time.

My heart started to race as I unfolded it.

There wasn’t much written on it. Most of the ink had faded beyond recognition, leaving only a handful of lines that could still be read. Near the bottom was, a list of names written in a different hand than the rest of the page.

I read them once.

Then I read them again.

“Caius…”

He looked at me immediately.

“What is it?”

My eyes stayed fixed on the final line.

It wasn’t a place.

The hidden

It wasn’t a title.

It was a warning.

~The child must never be returned. The bloodline depends on it.~

My eyes moved over the sentence again.

It didn't make sense.

I couldn't stop looking at one word.

Returned.

Why would anyone write that? Children weren't returned. They were born. They were raised by their families. Yet whoever had written this warning had chosen that word for a reason.

I looked over the rest of the page.

Most of the writing had faded beyond recognition, but two names had survived.

Derek.

Helene.

Nothing else had been written beside them. No explanation. No dates. Just two names, left behind as though whoever had hidden this page had expected someone to understand what they meant.

I searched my memories, trying to remember whether either of them had ever mentioned something that could explain any of this.

Nothing.

The more I thought about it, the less I understood.

If this page had been hidden here for centuries, then how could Derek and Helene's names be written on it?

I looked at Caius.

"I don't understand," I whispered.

Neither of us spoke for several seconds.

My eyes returned to the page.

What child was this talking about?

And why did I suddenly have the terrible feeling that the answer was going to change everything I thought I knew?

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 207

Before sunrise

(Rodan)

The cell was smaller than Texpected.

Stone walls. Iron bars. A narrow bed built into one corner. Nothing about it was designed for comfort because comfort wasn't the purpose. It was a place where condemned wolves waited for the Crown to carry out their sentence.

I walked to the bars and looked through them without expecting to see anything worth seeing

Morning.

That was what one of the guards had said before the door closed

At first light, my sentence would be carried out.

I felt nothing except the certainty that there was no road left to change where mine ended.

I turned away from the bars and sat on the edge of the bed.

The room was quiet.

Not the quiet of Ashcrest after dark, when patrols changed and wolves settled into their homes. This was different. The silence belonged to stone walls that had watched generations of condemned wolves wait for the same sunrise.

I rested my forearms on my knees and stared at the floor.

I'd stood in judgment over others.

I'd spoken sentences that changed lives.

I'd believed every one of them had been necessary.

Now the Crown had judged me.

There was a strange balance in that.

Not justice.

Not irony.

Only consequence.

A knock sounded against the bars.

One of the guards stepped into view carrying a tray.

Bread.

Water.

Nothing more.

He slid it through the opening without looking at me.

“Your final meal will be brought in the morning,” he said.

I looked at the tray before raising my eyes to him.

“I don’t need it.”

He nodded once.

“Most don’t.”

He picked up the untouched tray and walked away.

His footsteps faded until the prison became quiet again.

I leaned back against the wall and closed my eyes.

Ashcrest would continue without me.

Caius would rule.

Isla would stand beside him.

My name would become another lesson told to young Alphas who believed power alone was enough to keep a throne.

I looked around the cell once more.

There wasn’t much to see.

The walls had been worn smooth by time rather than claws. How many wolves had spent their final night here before walking the same road waiting for me? I doubted many of them had expected to end their lives this way.

Neither had I.

Expectation had never changed reality.

It certainly wasn’t going to start now.

I stood and walked the length of the cell.

It took only a few steps before reached the opposite wall. I turned and walked back again, more out of habit than purpose. There was nowhere else to go.

I stopped at the bais once more.

The corridor beyond remained empty, lit only by lanterns fixed to the stone walls. Somewhere above this prison, wolves were living their lives without giving this place a second thought. By the next sunrise. I would become another name recorded in the Crown’s history.

Footsteps came down the corridor.

This time they stopped outside my cell instead of passing by. I looked up as a Crown official stepped int view, his grey robes marked with the royal crest across the chest. He carried a scroll sealed with dark wa

“You are to be escorted at first light,” he said.

“The sentence has been confirmed by the Crown.”

He waited long enough to see if I had anything to say before breaking the seal and reading the order aloud. When he finished, he rolled the scroll closed and walked away without another word.

The words settled over the cell.

There would be no delay and no further hearing. Every document had been signed, every witness recorded, and every requirement under Crown law had been met. The process would continue exactly as it had for every condemned wolf before me.

I looked at the empty corridor.

Strange how quickly a life could be reduced to paperwork. Years spent building a territory, leading a pack and defending a name had ended with a sealed scroll and a few spoken words.

Nothing more was required.

I returned to the bed and sat down again.

The hours ahead no longer belonged to me. They belonged to the Crown, measured out by changing guards and the slow fading of the lanterns outside my cell. All I could do now was wait.

I thought about Ashcrest one last time.

Not the hearing.

Not the sentence.

Not Caius standing before the pack or Isla beside him.

I thought about the territory itself and how easily it had continued without the wolf who had once believed it could never exist without him.

I remembered the first time my father had walked me through those lands.

He'd told me every Alpha ruled only for a time, but the territory always remained. I hadn't believed him then. I'd been young enough to think Ashcrest and my family would always be one and the same

He'd been right.

The borders still stood.

The patrols would still be made.

By the next moon, wolves would speak Caius's name where they had once spoken mine, and the land would answer him just as readily.

My father believed strength was what held a territory together.

He taught me an Alpha could never afford weakness because the pack would sense it long before he did. I Tollowed that lesson for most of my life without ever questioning it.

Caius ruled differently

Whether I agreed with him no longer mattered.

Ashcrest belonged to him now.

History would decide which of us had understood leadership better.

The prison settled into silence once more.

The guards continued their rounds beyond the bars while the lanterns burned lower with each passing hour. Nothing about the night felt unusual to them. To the Crown, this was simply another sentence waiting to be fulfilled.

I rested against the wall and closed my eyes.

By this time tomorrow, my cell would stand empty. The Crown would move on to its next duty, Ashcrest would move on to its next Alpha, and the world would continue without waiting for my name to be remembered.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 208

A page out of time

(Caius)

I read the page again.

Then I read it a third time, hoping I'd missed something.

I hadn't.

The warning was exactly the same. Short. Direct. Written by someone who believed every extra word carried a risk.

"The names don't belong here," I said.

Isla looked up.

"What do you mean?"

"This journal is centuries old." I tapped the page. "Every other name belongs to wolves who died long ag

Her eyes dropped back to the writing.

“Then why are Derek and Helene here?”

“I don’t know.”

The answer tasted bitter.

A king wasn’t expected to know everything, but I’d spent years studying old records. I’d never seen anything like this.

I lifted the page closer to the lantern.

The ink caught my attention immediately.

Most of the writing had faded with time, but the names near the bottom were darker. They weren’t fresh, but they weren’t as old as everything around them either.,

“They weren’t written at the same time,” I said.

Isla frowned.

“You think someone came back and added them?”

“I do.”

Nothing about this page felt random.

Someone had hidden a warning inside an old journal.

Someone had added two names that had no place there.

And someone had gone to great lengths to make sure neither would be found easily.

A page out of time

Hooked at Isla.

“We’re missing part of the story.”

She gave a slow nod.

“I was thinking the same thing.”

“There has to be another record somewhere.”

Neither of us reached for another journal.

The page between us demanded all of our attention.

I studied the names one more time before folding the sheet exactly as we'd found it.

"If those names were added later," I said, "there's a reason they were hidden instead of written somewhere else."

Isla rested her hands on the table.

"Do you think they wanted someone to find it?"

"Eventually."

"But not right away?"

I shook my head.

"If they wanted it discovered quickly, they wouldn't have hidden it."

She looked at the folded page.

"Then they were waiting for the right person."

The words settled over us.

"Me," she said quietly.

"I don't know," I admitted. "But I do know this wasn't hidden by accident."

I walked to the nearest shelf and slid the journą! back into the space where we'd found it.

Something caught my attention.

Dust covered every journal around it, but not this one.

Someone had taken it down before we did.

They'd returned it carelessly, leaving it slightly out of place.

I looked along the row of worn bindings.

"If this one was disturbed," I said, "there could be more."

Isla joined me.

"What are we looking for?"

“The same handwriting.”

She looked at me for a moment.

“You think whoever wrote those names left another clue.”

“I think they knew the truth could disappear.”

I rested my hand against another journal before pulling it free.

“And I think they wanted to make sure it didn’t.”

We searched through one journal after another.

Every page carried the history of our kind.

Old treaties.

Records of alliances.

Harvests.

Ceremonies.

Letters between kings.

Important in their own way, but none of them answered the questions we’d brought with us.

Hours slipped by.

The lanterns burned lower, and another stack of finished journals grew beside us.

I closed the last one in front of me.

“Nothing.”

Isla let out a quiet breath.

“So this is all we have.”

“For now.”

Her eyes found the folded page again.

“It isn’t enough.”

“No,” I said. “But it’s more than we knew this morning.”

She was quiet for a while before speaking again.

“The warning keeps repeating in my head.”

I already knew which words she meant.

A page out of time

The child must never be returned. The bloodline depends on it.‘

“I know.”

She looked down at the journal.

“There has to be more.”

“I believe there is.”

“But we haven’t found it.”

“Not yet.”

I picked up the folded page and slipped it back inside the journal exactly as we’d found it.

“Until we understand what it means,” I said, “this stays between us.

She met my eyes.

“Agreed.”

She didn’t move straight away.

Her eyes remained on the closed journal, and I knew her thoughts hadn’t left the warning.

Questions had a way of growing louder when there were no answers to quiet them.

I rested my hand over hers.

“We don’t have to solve this today.”

She looked at me.

“I know.”

“It doesn’t change who you are.”

A smile appeared on her face.

“No.”

“Good.”

I picked up another journal and placed it on the table between us.

“Let’s keep going.”

She nodded and opened it while I reached for another.

The leather binding cracked as I lifted the cover. The handwriting inside was neat, each line written with care by someone who believed these records would outlive them.

The first pages held nothing we needed.

Trade agreements.

Seasonal reports.

Messages exchanged between neighboring kings.

I turned another page.

Still nothing.

Across from me, Isla had already worked through several pages of her own journal. Every now and then she paused to read a passage before moving on

“Anything?” I asked.

She shook her head.

“Not yet.”

I returned to my own journal.

The deeper we searched, the clearer it became why the truth had remained hidden for so long

These records weren’t written to tell stories.

They were written to preserve history.

If someone wanted to hide the truth, all they had to do was bury it among thousands of ordinary pages.

I finished another journal and set it aside.

Nothing.

I reached for the next one without hesitation.

So did Isla.

Time slipped past unnoticed as page after page turned beneath our hands.

Most of what we found spoke of peaceful years.

Border agreements.

New Alpha ceremonies.

Records of births, deaths, and alliances.

Important to those who had written them, but they offered nothing about the hidden warning or the names we'd found.

At last I closed another journal and looked at the growing stack beside me.

"We've covered enough for today."

Işla looked up.

"I was hoping you'd say one more."

Ismiled.

"I know."

She closed her journal and rested her hand on the cover.

"We'll come back tomorrow."

"Yes."

"And the day after that if we have to."

I nodded once.

“We’ll keep looking until we know the truth.”

I gathered the journals we’d finished and returned them to their places before picking up the one that held the folded page.

For a moment, I rested my hand against its worn cover.

Someone had hidden that warning because they believed it mattered.

Centuries later, it had finally been found.

That couldn’t be a coincidence.

I slid the journal back where it belonged and looked at Isla.

“We’ll find the rest.”

She studied me for a moment before giving a quiet pod.

“I believe we will.”

The search wasn’t over. If anything, today had only shown us how much history still waited to be uncovered.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 209

First light–1

(Rodan)

The sound of the lock woke me before the guard spoke. I opened my eyes and found three royal guards waiting outside the bars. The lanterns behind them were still burning, but the sky beyond the prison had begun to brighten. First light had come.

I sat up and placed both feet on the floor. My body felt heavier than it had the night before, but I didn’t allow it to show. One of the royal guards unlocked the cell while the other two watched me. None of the reached for their weapons.

“Stand,” the guard ordered.

I rose without answering and held my hands in front of me. He fastened iron restraints around my wrists and checked each one before stepping back. The chains were heavy, but they weren't tight enough to cause pain.

"Do you have any final requests?" he asked.

I looked past him at the empty corridor. There was nothing I wanted from Caius and no one I wished to see.

"No."

He nodded as though he'd expected that answer. The guards formed around me, one in front and two behind. I stepped out of the cell without looking back. There was no reason to remember a place I'd occupied for only one night.

We walked through the prison in silence. The corridor seemed longer than it had when I'd been brought in though I knew that wasn't possible. Locked doors lined both sides, but no voices came from behind them Either the other prisoners were asleep or they'd learned not to speak when a condemned wolf passed.

The guard ahead of me stopped at a set of iron doors. He removed a key from his belt and unlocked them while the others remained close behind me. Cold morning air entered the corridor as the doors opened. I breathed it in without meaning to.

The prison yard was larger than I'd expected. Stone walls surrounded it, with royal guards posted above and along the ground. A wooden platform stood in the centre, built high enough for everyone present to see. There weren't many witnesses.

A royal official waited beside the platform with the same sealed order he'd read the night before. Two council representatives stood with him, both wearing ceremonial robes. A healer remained several steps away with a small leather case. Everything had been prepared to carry out Alpha King Caius' sentence.

I was led across the yard. Gravel shifted beneath my boots while the guards kept pace around me. No crowd shouted my name or demanded my death. The silence suited the moment better than celebration ever could.

At the bottom of the platform, the guard removed the chain connecting my wrists. The restraints remained, but I could lift my hands without dragging the weight between them.

He pointed toward the steps.

Up

I climbed without hesitation. Each step brought the yard into clearer view. Beyond the prison walls, the had begun to change from grey to pale gold. Somewhere beyond those walls, Ashcrest was waking.

The wolves at Ashcrest would know the moment it happened. The bond every pack shared with its Alp would break, and another would take its place. Life inside the pack house would continue, even if my name didn't.

The royal official stepped forward once I reached the centre of the platform. Ple unrolled the order and faced the witnesses below. His voice carried across the yard as he read my name, rank, crimes, and sentence. I listened without lowering my head.

"Rodan of Ashcrest," he said when the list was complete. "By the judgment of Alpha King Caius, you hav been found guilty of unlawful imprisonment, abuse of power, cruelty against a member of your pack, an defiance of royal law."

He paused before speaking the final words.

"The sentence passed against you is death."

The words didn't surprise me. I'd heard them before, first at the hearing and again inside the prison. Hearing them beneath the morning sky made them feel more final. There was no wall between the sentence and its fulfilment now.

"Do you understand the judgment passed against you?" the official asked.

"I understand."

My voice carried clearly across the yard. No one could claim I hadn't heard or accepted what came next.

First light 2

First light–2

"Do you wish to speak before the sentence is carried out?"

I looked at the wolves gathered below. None of them belonged to Ashcrest, and none of them knew me beyond the crimes written on the scroll. Anything I said would become part of the official record. I had n interest in offering them regret I didn't feel.

"I've already said what I needed to say," I answered.

The royal official watched me for another moment before rolling the scroll closed. He handed it to one o the council representatives. The executioner stepped onto the platform.

He wore no mask. I respected that more than I would've respected a wolf who hid his face. His clothes were plain, and a long sword rested at his side. He stopped several feet away and waited for the official's command.

A guard came behind me and removed the restraints from my wrists. For one brief moment, my hands were free again. I rubbed the marks left by the iron before letting my arms fall. The guard pointed toward wooden block at the centre of the platform.

I walked to it and stopped. The block was worn from years of use, though someone had cleaned it before morning. Everything had been prepared to carry out Alpha King Caius' judgment. That made it easier to understand.

"Kneel," the executioner said.

I lowered myself onto both knees. The gravel pressed through the fabric of my trousers. I placed my hand on my thighs and looked toward the eastern wall.

The sky beyond the walls was growing brighter. Morning had arrived whether I was there to see it or not. The wolves at Ashcrest would be seeing the same sunrise.

For years, I'd believed a pack carried the mark of its Alpha. I'd thought my strength had shaped Ashcrest and my decisions had kept it alive. The truth was less flattering. The territory had existed before me and would continue after me.

Caius would change it. He'd remove those loyal to my ways and replace them with woWes who believed in his. He'd speak of fairness, old laws, and his duty as Alpha King to protect ever the weakest member of a pack. Ashcrest would learn to obey him as it had once obeyed me.

Isla would stand beside him. The woif I'd kept chained would walk freely through the territory I'd once ruled. Wolves who'd ignored her suffering would bow when she passed. There was meaning in that, though

I didn't care to name it.

I hadn't expected her to survive. I'd believed five years of wolfsbane and hunger would've broken any wolf. Instead, she'd become something none of us had understood. A Celestial had risen from the shack where I'd allowed her to be treated as less than nothing.

Perhaps that was why Caius had shown no mercy. My crime hadn't only been what I'd done to her. I'd nearly destroyed a bloodline that the old laws placed above every Alpha. The same act I'd considered unimportant had become the reason my name would end here.

The royal official stepped beside me.

“The sentence will now be carried out.”

His words were meant for the witnesses, not for me. I kept my eyes on the growing light. The morning ha become warmer in colour.

I heard the executioner remove the sword from its sheath. The sound travelled across the platform and ended quickly. He moved behind me without speaking. I didn’t turn to look.

Fear would’ve changed nothing. Begging would’ve changed even less. I’d spent my life telling others that weakness invited defeat. I wouldn’t abandon that belief simply because defeat had finally found me.

My father had said every Alpha ruled for only a time. I’d rejected the lesson because I thought he was preparing me to accept failure. Now I understood he’d only been telling me the truth. No throne belonged to one wolf forever.

Ashcrest had been mine. Then I’d lost it. Caius had taken control, and no wolf had the strength to challenge his right to rule. There was nothing left to argue.

The executioner told me to lower my head. I leaned forward and rested my neck against the block. The wood was cold against my skin. My hands remained open on either side of me.

My thoughts turned to Maren. I wondered whether she’d heard the sentence or chosen not to ask. Her name had once carried weight because it was joined to mine. By midday, she’d be the former mate of a dead Alpha.

I thought of Derek as well. He’d followed my rule because it protected him from answering for what he’d done. That protection had ended when Caius entered Ashcrest. Whatever future waited for Derek, he would face it without me.

The royal official asked whether the executioner was prepared.

“I am,” the wolf answered.

The healer moved closer to the platform. His task would begin after mine ended.

The rising sun warmed the side of my face. Birds called somewhere beyond the walls, unaware of the sentence being carried out below them. The world didn’t pause because one wolf had reached the end of his life. It never had.

I closed my eyes. I didn’t pray to the Moon Goddess or ask for forgiveness. Forgiveness belonged to those who regretted the path they’d chosen. I regretted only that I’d lost.

The royal official raised his hand.

“By the judgment of Aipha King Caius and under the laws of the kingdom, the sentence against Rodan of Ashcrest is to be carried out.”

His hand fell.

“Carry it out.”

The executioner shifted behind me. I heard the sword rise and felt the movement of air above my back.

First light 2

There wasn’t time for another thought. There wasn’t a need for one.

Volume

Ashcrest would continue. Caius would rule. Isla would live. My name would pass into history as a warning.

The sword came down.

For one final moment, the morning light remained against my closed eyes.

Then there was nothing.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 210

Alpha Alec’s Redemption

Alpha Alec’s Redemption

Kathy M/I Completed

Her love became her curse–now she’s his redemption.

The end ofone chapter

The end of one chapter

(Caius)

I woke before the sun had fully risen.

Isla was asleep beside me with one hand resting near mine. She hadn't moved much during the night. I stayed where I was and watched her for a moment.

Yesterday's questions had followed us from the library. The hidden page had given us more questions than answers, and seeing Derek and Helene's names written there had only deepened the mystery.

Without opening her eyes, Isla moved a little closer. Her fingers found my wrist beneath the blankets. I turned my hand and held hers. She settled again almost immediately.

I didn't want to wake her.

She'd spent hours searching through records that had led nowhere. Even after we'd stopped, she'd wanted to keep looking. Isla had never been the sort of wolf to leave a question unanswered.

A quiet knock sounded at the door.

I almost ignored it.

Then it came again.

Isla opened her eyes.

"Someone's at the door."

"I heard."

"Are you going to answer it?"

"I was considering pretending I didn't."

She smiled.

"That isn't very kingly."

"No one said I had to be kingly before breakfast."

A quiet laugh escaped her.

She pulled the blankets higher before closing her eyes again. I kissed her forehead and slipped out of bed Another knock came just before I reached the door.

Pryor stood outside.

He wore his formal coat despite the early hour. One look at his face told me the visit couldn't wait. i stepped into the hallway and pulled the door almost closed behind me.

"Alpha King."

The end ofone chapter

"What happened?"

"A royal guard delivered a report this morning."

I already knew what it would say.

"Rodan's sentence was carried out at first light," Pryor said.

He offered me the sealed report.

"The commanding officer confirmed his death."

I accepted it but didn't break the seal.

I'd been the one to pass the sentence. The report wasn't telling me anything new. It only confirmed the order had been carried out.

"Was there any trouble?"

"None."

"Did he say anything?"

"Nothing the commanding officer considered necessary to record."

I looked at the seal for a moment.

Rodan had met the end the same way he'd faced judgment. He hadn't begged. He hadn't asked for mercy. Pride had stayed with him until the end.

"Has Ashcrest been informed?"

"Yes. Official notice was delivered before the report was sent."

"And Helene?"

"She'll receive notice as well."

I handed the report back.

“There isn’t any need to bring that inside. Isla doesn’t need the details.”

“I understand.”

“Have the morning reports placed in my office.”

“I’ll see to it.”

“Thank you, Pryor.”

He bowed before walking away.

I remained where I was for another moment.

Rodan was dead.

The end of one chapter

After everything he’d done, I thought I might feel satisfaction. Instead there was only the certainty that one chapter had finally closed.

When I returned to our room, Isla was sitting against the pillows.

Her hair framed her face, and she still looked half asleep. She watched me close the door.

“That was Pryor.”

“It was.”

“Something happened.”

I sat beside her.

Rodan had already taken enough from her. I wasn’t about to let his death take arry more.

“A royal guard delivered a report,” I said.

She waited.

“Rodan was executed at first light.”

She didn’t react straight away.

I watched her carefully.

There was no fear.

No sadness.

Only acceptance.

“Are you all right?” I asked.

“Yes.”

She held my gaze for a moment before speaking again.

“I wondered how I’d feel when this day came.”

“And now?”

She shrugged lightly.

“It doesn’t change anything.”

I waited.

“He stopped having any place in my life the day you found me.”

I reached for her hand.

“I know.”

She intertwined her fingers with mine.

The end ofond chapter

-don’t have anything left to say about Rodan.”

“You don’t have to.”

She shook her head

“I left him behind a long time ago.”

For a moment, neither of us spoke.

The silence wasn’t uncomfortable.

It simply marked the end of something that had already been over for a long time.

She looked at me again.

“We have more important things to do.”

“The journal?”

She smiled.

“The journal. My training. The Eastern council.”

I smiled back.

“I thought you’d say that.”

“I’d rather spend my time finding answers than thinking about someone who’s already part of the past.”

“So would I.”

She climbed out of bed and walked to the window.

Morning light filled the room as she looked out over Wraithbone.

“I don’t want today to be remembered because Rodan died,” she said.

“What do you want it remembered for?”

“The day we moved forward.”

I joined her at the window.

“I think that’s exactly what we’ll do.”

She looked out across the courtyard where warriors were already beginning their day.

“Will Ashcrest know?”

“They’ll feel the loss of the Alpha bond.”

She nodded.

“And Maren?”

The end ofondehapter

“Her mate bond ended with his death.”

Isla was quiet for a moment.

“She made her own choices.”

“She did.”

She turned to me again.

“Do you have work this morning?”

“The morning reports are waiting.”

“And after that?”

I smiled.

“The rest of the day belongs to you.”

She laughed.

“Good. We’re going back to the library.”

“I expected nothing less.”

“We still haven’t discovered why Derek and Helene’s names were added to that journal.”

“No.”

“And I’m not finished learning what Vaela and I can do.”

“No. You’re only beginning.”

“The Eastern council won’t wait forever.”

“They won’t.”

“Then we’d better be ready.”

“We will.”

We dressed for the day.

Neither of us spoke about Rodan again. There wasn’t any reason to. We’d already left him where he belonged. The future deserved our attention instead.

As I fastened my coat, I looked at Isla for a moment. She wasn’t the frightened young woman I’d found that shack. She stood with quiet confidence beside the window. Every day she looked more like the Celestial she had always been.

I opened the door and waited for her. She smiled before slipping her hand into mine. Together we stepped into the hallway. There was work waiting for both of us.

The journal still held its secrets. Isla’s training had only just begun. The Eastern council would arrive soon enough. We had plenty ahead of us.

The end of one chapter

I found myself thinking about everything that still waited to be discovered. Some answers had finally come. Others were still waiting for us. I intended to uncover every one of them.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 211

An unexpected letter

(Caius)

We left our quarters together and walked through the pack house in comfortable silence.

The morning had only just begun. Most wolves were making their way toward breakfast while servants prepared for another day. Isla looked at me after a few moments.

“You still have reports to finish.”

“I do.”

“I’ll wait.”

“I won’t keep you waiting long.”

She nodded.

“I’ll see you soon.”

Before either of us could continue, Pryor appeared at the far end of the hallway carrying another folder beneath his arm. He reached us a moment later and inclined his head.

“Alpha King.”

“What is it?”

“One of the morning reports arrived after I left the others in your office.”

I accepted the folder.

“Anything urgent?”

“I thought it best to let you decide.”

I glanced at Isla.

She smiled.

“I’ll be waiting.”

With that, we went our separate ways, I headed toward my office while Isla continued toward the library

I reached my office a minute later and closed the door behind me.

The reports Pryor had mentioned were waiting exactly where he’d said they would be. I set the new folder beside them before taking my seat. If Isla was already in the library, I intended to keep my promise and join her as soon as I could.

The first report covered the northern border.

Nothing had changed overnight. Patrols had completed their routes without incident, and every checkpoint reported the same thing. The territory had remained quiet.

An unexpected letter

The second folder contained supply records,

Food stores were well stocked, and the latest deliveries had arrived on schedule. The quartermaster had requested approval for additional winter supplies even though the colder months were still some time away. I signed the request without hesitation.

I reached for the final folder.

This was the one Pryor had brought himself. It contained only a single folded letter sealed with dark gree wax. There was no name on the front, only the royal seal pressed into the wax.

I turned it over once before breaking the seal.

The first line made me stop.

The Eastern council has requested that the meeting be moved forward by one day.

That wasn't expected.

The rest of the letter explained that the representatives had crossed the border earlier than planned and intended to reach Wraithbone before tomorrow evening. It offered no explanation for the change.

I leaned back in my chair.

Councils rarely changed their schedule without good reason.

Either something had happened in the Eastern Territories, or they'd learned something they believed couldn't wait. Neither possibility sat well with me.

I folded the letter and placed it on top of the other reports.

The library would have to wait a little longer.

First, I needed Pryor.

I reached for him through the mind link.

'Come to my office!

'I'll be there in a moment, Alpha King, he replied.

The connection faded.

I read the letter once more. Nothing on the page explained why the Eastern council had changed its plans.

It simply informed us they would arrive tomorrow instead of the following day.

A knock came at the door less than a minute later.

"Come in."

Pryor stepped inside and closed the door behind him. His attention went straight to the letter in my hand before meeting my eyes.

"You've read it."

have."

"What are your thoughts?"

“The Eastern council doesn’t change its schedule without a reason.”

Pryor nodded.

“I agree.”

I set the letter on the desk.

“We’re going to prepare as though they expect more than a routine meeting.”

“Understood.”

“I want every remaining preparation completed before sunset. Double the guards assigned to the council chambers and guest quarters. Until we know why they’ve arrived early, we assume nothing.”

“It will be done, Alpha King.”

Before Pryor reached the door, he stopped.

“There is one more thing.”

I looked at him.

“What is it?”

“The messenger mentioned something just before he left.”

I waited.

“He said the council insisted the letter be placed directly into your hands.”

“Did he say why?”

“No.”

“Anything else?”

Pryor thought for a moment.

“He seemed nervous.”

“Nervous?”

“He looked over his shouider more than once, as though he expected someone to be following him.”

I considered that in silence.

It could have meant nothing.

Or it could have explained why the council had changed its plans without warning.

“Thank you, Pryor.”

An unexpected letter

Il begin making the necessary arrangements.”

He turned and left the office, closing the door behind him.

I looked at the letter again.

There was more to this meeting than anyone was willing to put into writing.

I slipped the letter inside my coat and gathered the remaining reports into a single stack.

There was nothing else on my desk that couldn’t wait until later. Pryor would see that the preparations were carried out exactly as I’d ordered. For the moment, there was only one person I wanted to speak to.

I left my office and made my way through the pack house.

The corridors had grown busier while I’d been working. Servants moved between rooms carrying fresh supplies, and warriors crossed the courtyard outside on their way to morning training. Tomorrow had just become far more important.

The library door stood open when I arrived.

Isla was sitting where we’d left the journal the day before. Several old books lay open around her, but she looked up the moment she heard my footsteps. A smile crossed her face before her eyes settled on the letter in my hand.

“You were gone longer than you expected.”

“I was.”

“Something happened.”

I walked to the table and placed the letter beside the journal.

“The Eastern council has changed its plans.”

Her smile faded.

“They’re arriving early?”

“They’ll be here tomorrow.”

She looked at the letter for a moment before meeting my eyes again.

“That’s not good.”

“No.”

I pulled out the chair beside her and sat down.

“I think it’s connected to this.”

I rested my hand on the journal.

“And I intend to find out how.”

The missing records 1

The missing records–1

(Caius)

“Show me what you’ve found.”

Isla turned the journal toward me and pulled one of the open history books closer. Several pages had beer marked with thin strips of cloth, and notes covered the paper beside her. She’d done far more than wait fo

“I started with the names written near the end of the journal.”

She pointed to the list she’d made while I was in my office. Some of the names were familiar, while others had only appeared once in the older records. Beside each one, she’d written the title of the book where it should’ve been mentioned.

“Most of them aren’t in the official records.”

I looked over the names again and compared them to the open books. The years matched, but the people listed in the journal had been left out. It was as though they had never existed.

“You think someone removed them.”

Isla opened one of the books and turned it toward me. Several pages had been cut out close to the binding, leaving narrow pieces behind. Whoever had done it had taken care not to damage the rest of the book.

“I know someone removed them.”

She reached for another book and opened it to a marked section. The page numbers jumped forward, and the missing part covered the same years as the first book. This wasn’t damage caused by age.

“How many books have you found like this?”

“Five so far.”

She placed the second book beside the first. Each one had been written by a different historian, but the missing sections covered the same families. Someone had gone through a great deal of trouble to erase them.

I placed the council letter beside her notes. The dark green seal looked different now that I knew what she had found. The timing was too close to ignore.

“The council changed its plans on the same morning you discovered this.”

Isla looked at the letter before returning her attention to me. The worry in her eyes matched what I was already thinking. Their early arrival couldn’t be treated as a simple change of schedule.

“You think they know we’re searching.”

I rested one hand beside the journal. I didn’t know whether every council member was involved, but someone among them might be. The missing records and the sudden meeting had to be connected.

The missing–records–1 think someone knows more than they’re willing to admit.”

Isla lowered her eyes to the journal. Her fingers moved near one of the faded symbols at the bottom of the page. She stopped before touching it.

“There was something else!

I watched her more carefully. Her voice had changed, and I knew she was about to tell me something important. She looked uncertain about how to explain it.

“What happened?”

“I touched this symbol earlier.”

The mark looked like a circle surrounding an open eye. It had been drawn in darker ink than most of the writing around it. I had seen it before but never considered that it might matter.

“And then?”

“I saw a room.”

She pressed her hands together on the table. The memory seemed to trouble her even though it had only lasted for a moment. I waited without rushing her.

“What was in the room?”

“Several people were speaking, but I couldn’t see their faces.”

Her gaze moved back to the symbol. She said the room had been dark except for a fire near the wall. Someone had warned that the truth couldn’t be allowed to reach Wraithbone.

Vorak moved inside me as I considered her words. The message could’ve come from the past, but it might have been connected to something happening now. Either way, the journal had responded to Isla.

‘They knew she would find it,‘ Vorak said.

I kept my face calm while answering him through the link. I wasn’t ready to make that conclusion yet. We still knew too little about what the journal could show her.

‘We need proof first.’”

Isla looked at me as though she sensed my concern. Her gift had already shown her things no one else could see. That didn’t mean she understood how to control it.

“I tried touching it again.”

I turned fully toward her. The first vision had happened by accident, but the second had been a choice. ! didn’t like knowing she’d tested it alone.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 212

The missing records–2

“What did you see the second time?”

“The same room, but there were more people.”

She told me she had counted at least seven figures. One had been standing near a table covered with papers, while another kept watch near the door. Before she could hear more, the vision had disappeared.

“Did it hurt you?”

“No, but it left me tired.”

That answer didn’t ease my concern. Her face looked normal now, but I didn’t know what repeated visions could do to her. We couldn’t treat her gift like something without limits.

I closed the journal before she could touch the symbol again. She watched my hand but didn’t try to stop me. I knew she wouldn’t like what I was about to say.

“You’re not doing that again until we understand it better.”

Her expression changed at once. She didn’t argue yet, but I could see the words forming. Isla had never liked being told to stand aside when danger involved her.

“We don’t have time to wait.”

I understood why she felt that way. The council would arrive tomorrow, and someone might already know the journal had been found. Still, I wasn’t willing to risk her life for an answer we might not get.

“Then we use the time we have properly.”

She leaned back in her chair. The frustration remained, but she was listening. That was enough for now.

“How do we do that?”

“We start with your gift, not the journal.”

She looked toward the closed book again. The journal had forced a vision on her because she wasn’t prepared for what it held. I wanted her to learn control before she touched it again. P

“You think I can train this quickly?”

“I think we have to try.”

I moved the council letter closer to her. The messenger's fear had stayed with me since Pryor described it. If Isla could sense what had happened before the letter reached Wraithbone, we might learn more withou putting her in danger.

"Start with this."

She picked up the letter and held it between both hands. Nothing happened at first, and she looked at me for guidance. I kept my voice calm.

"Don't search for words."

The missing–records–2

She closed her eyes. Her fingers moved over the seal while the rest of her remained still. Several moments passed before her breathing changed.

"Fear."

I watched her face. The answer came without hesitation, but ! needed to know more. Fear could have belonged to the messenger or to whoever had sent him.

"Whose fear?"

"I don't think it belongs to the messenger."

She kept her fingers against the wax. The feeling had been there before he took the letter, which meant someone else had handled it first. Whoever that person was had believed the message might never reach

Isla opened her eyes and placed the letter down. She looked tired again, though not as much as before. It was the first sign that her gift could be used without the journal.

"We train after breakfast."

She glanced toward the windows. Morning had already moved on while we were in the library. Neither of us had noticed how much time had passed.

"We already missed breakfast."

"Then we eat now."

A small smile appeared on her face. I stood and held out my hand. She placed hers in mine without hesitation.

The council would arrive tomorrow, and someone among them might be hiding the truth. We had less than a day to prepare Isla for something neither of us fully understood. I intended to use every hour we had.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 213

Torvin is dead

(Isla)

Caius kept hold of my hand as we left the library. The journal remained on the table behind us, but my thoughts stayed with it. I could still feel the fear that had come from the council seal. It had left something behind that I couldn't explain.

We walked through the pack house toward the dining room. Breakfast had already ended for most of the pack, and a servant came forward as soon as she saw us. Caius asked her to bring fresh food from the kitchen, then guided me toward a table near the windows. I sat across from him while he placed the council letter beside his plate. He hadn't let it out of his sight since I touched it.

I looked at the seal again. The fear inside it had belonged to someone who handled the letter before the messenger. I couldn't see a face or hear a name, but the feeling had been clear. Someone had been afraid the message wouldn't reach Caius.

"Do you think the person who sent it is in danger?"

Caius looked at the letter before answering. He didn't dismiss the possibility, which told me he had already considered it. "It's possible, but we don't know who sent it yet."

The servant returned with bread, eggs, and warm tea, then left again. Caius broke a piece of bread and placed it on my plate. He hadn't said anything about the way I'd used my gift, but I knew he was thinking about it. He always became quieter when he was worried.

"You don't have to watch me eat."

His eyes lifted to mine. For a moment he looked as though he might deny doing it. Instead he picked up his own bread. "I'm making sure you don't forget."

I ate a piece of fruit to satisfy him. My gift had never worked like this before. The first time, I had only sensed emotions from another person. Then I'd begun seeing memories that didn't belong to me. Now ! could touch an object and feel what someone had left behind. Each new part had appeared without warning.

“What happens if my gift keeps growing faster than the journal accounts for?”

”

Caius stopped before lifting his cup. I could see that he wanted to give me an answer. This time he didn’t have one. “I don’t know yet.”

His honesty should’ve comforted me, but it didn’t. Caius usually knew what to do, even when the answer required time. My gift was becoining something neither of us could measure.

“What if I can’t control it?”

He placed his cup down. He didn’t reach across the table or tell me not to worry. He knew I needed more than comfort. “Then we learn how together.”

He couldn’t promise the gift wouldn’t hurt me, or that I would master it before the council arrived. What he could promise was that I wouldn’t face it alone. For the moment, that helped.

Before either of us spoke again, I noticed Pryor walking through the dining room. Lira was beside him, still

Torvin is dead-

wearing the cloak she’d traveled in. Dust covered the bottom of the fabric, and I guessed she’d only just Teturned to Wraithbone.

Caius followed my gaze

“Lira’s back,” he said.

Pryor saw us and changed direction without hesitation. By the time they reached the table, both of them inclined their heads in greeting. Lira smiled at me before looking at Caius.

“Alpha King. Luna.”

“Welcome back,” Caius said. “I wasn’t expecting you to return this early.”

“Neither was I,” Lira replied. “I came as soon as I finished at the gates at Ashcrest.”

Pryor rested a hand on the back of an empty chair but remained standing. “I met Delta Lira as she arrived. After hearing her report, I believed you would want to speak with her immediately.”

Caius gave a single nod.

“What happened?”

Lira looked at Caius without saying anything for a moment. Whatever she’d carried back from Ashcrest had followed her all the way to Wraithbone.

“Torvin is dead.”

The words settled over the table.

I looked at Caius.

His expression didn’t change, but I knew him well enough to see that he hadn’t expected those words.

“What happened?” he asked.

Lira drew a slow breath.

“Zeron made the discovery during our final walk through the holding area before we departed. She looked from Caius to me before continuing. “Torvin failed to answer when the guard called to him. Zeron entered the cell and found him on the floor.”

Pryor remained silent beside her.

“The Ashcrest healer examined him immediately,” Lira continued. “At first they believed the wolfsbane had finally become too much for his body.”

Caius’s eyes narrowed.

“At first?”

“The examination didn’t support that conclusion.”

Silence settled around the table.

“The amount of wolfsbane in his system was far greater than the chain should have caused,” Lira said.

The healer concluded someone gave him more.”

Caius didn’t speak.

“He was given food and water exactly as ordered,” Lira said. “The guards never removed the restraint, and the records show nothing out of the ordinary...

“Then how?” I asked.

Lira looked at me.

“The healer believes additional wolfsbane entered his body sometime during the night.”

No one at the table spoke.

Someone had increased the dose.

Someone had wanted Torvin dead.

Caius looked at the sealed letter beside his plate.

“The Eastern Council changes its plans without explanation,” he said. “Now a prisoner under my sentence dies before they arrive.”

Pryor gave a slight nod.

“The timing will raise questions.”

“It already has.”

I looked down at my plate.

The man who had fastened that wolfsbane chain around my ankle over and over again would never do it to anyone else. That chapter of my life had ended forever.

“I’m glad he’s dead,” I said.

The words came out quietly.

No one looked surprised.

Caius turned his attention to me.

“You don’t have to mourn him.”

“I won’t.”

He gave a single nod.

“Neither will I.”

Lira looked back at Caius.

“What are your orders?”

His eyes settled on the green seal orice more.

“We treat Torvin’s death as interference with a royal sentence,” he said. “No one enters or leaves Ashcrest until I know who did this.”

I didn’t feel guilty.

Rodan was dead, and now Torvin was too. If anyone expected me to mourn either of them, they would be disappointed.

Things just kept getting better and better.

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The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 214

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A death too soon

(Caius)

I looked at Pryor.

“Have Zeron report here.”

“I’ll bring him.”

Pryor left the dining room without another word. Lira remained beside the table because there was nothing else to report until Zeron arrived. Isla reached for her tea but never took a drink. Her attention stayed on the green council seal resting beside my plate.

No one spoke.

Torvin’s death had changed the direction of the morning. A prisoner under my judgment hadn’t simply died. Someone had interfered before my sentence had run its course.

Several minutes passed before footsteps reached the dining room.

Zeron entered still dressed for travel. Dust covered the hem of his cloak, and his sword remained fastened at his side. His eyes moved briefly to Isla before returning to me. Then he stopped beside the table.

“You wanted to see me.”

“I did.”

I motioned toward the empty chair.

“Sit.”

He lowered himself into the chair without hesitation. Lira remained standing nearby while Pryor returned to his place beside the wall. Isla still hadn’t looked away from the seal.

“Lira told me you found Torvin.”

“I did.”

“I want every detail.”

Zeron gave a single nod.

“We were preparing to leave Ashcrest. Before we departed, I went to check on Torvin one final time. ! wanted to confirm he remained under the conditions of your sentence before responsibility passed to the royal guards staying behind. Nothing suggested there would be a problem.”

He paused before continuing.

“When we reached the cell, the guard called to him. There was no answer. He called again, but Torvin never moved. That’s when I went inside.”

“So you entered immediately.”

A death top 8ooH

“Yes.”

His expression remained unchanged.

“Torvin was lying beside the bed. The restraint was still secured exactly as you ordered. Nothing looked out of place, but I knew something wasn’t right the moment I saw him.”

I held his gaze.

“What did you see?”

“He wasn’t lying the way I’d expected. If the restraint had finally overcome hirn, I would’ve expected a gradual decline. Instead, it looked as though death had come quickly.”

“You touched nothing?”

“No.”

“What did you do?”

“I ordered the guards to remain outside the cell. No one entered after me.” He glanced briefly toward Lira before looking back at me. “Then I sent for the healer.”

“The healer examined him immediately?”

“Yes.”

“And reached the wrong conclusion.”

“At first.”

He nodded once.

“The restraint was the obvious explanation. It wasn’t until the examination continued that the healer realized the amount of wolfsbane in Torvin’s body couldn’t have come from the chain alone.”

I turned to Pryor.

“The guards?”

“We’ve already begun questioning them.”

“They’ll be interviewed separately?”

“They already are.”

“No one speaks to another until those interviews are complete.”

“It will be done.”

I looked back at Zeron.

“Did anyone have reason to silence Torvin before the Council arrived?”

“I don’t know.”

A death top 4000

His answer came without hesitation.

“But someone clearly believed he knew something worth killing for.”

Silence settled over the table:

I let his words sink in. This hadn’t been an act of panic. Whoever did this had planned it.

“Who remained assigned to Torvin after you left?”

“The same four as before. Two royal guards, the Ashcrest healer for scheduled inspections, and the servant responsible for his meals. No substitutions were made.”

I nodded once.

“Did Torvin say anything unusual before you left Ashcrest?”

Zeron thought for a moment.

“No.”

“Nothing?”

“He complained about the restraint. Asked how much longer it would remain.”

I wasn’t interested in complaints.

“Anything else?”

“He asked one question.”

“What was it?”

“He wanted to know whether the Eastern Council had arrived.”

The room became still.

Lira frowned.

“He asked that the evening before he died.”

Something about it refused to sit right with me,

“He knew they were coming.”

“He did.”

“Did anyone tell him?”

“No.”

That answer concerned me more than I cared to admit.

Someone inside Ashcrest had spoken to Torvin. Or someone outside had found a way to reach him. Neither possibility was acceptable.

A death top econ

Heaned back slightly.

“I don’t care that Torvin is dead.”

No one at the table–misunderstood what I meant.

“He should have died the day he decided chaining my mate was acceptable.”

My attention remained on Zeron.

“What I care about is when he died.”

Silence followed.

“He survived weeks under the sentence I imposed. Then the Eastern Council moved its arrival forward, and within a day someone made sure he would never answer another question.”

Lira nodded.

“The timing is difficult to ignore.”

“It isn’t difficult,” I said. “It’s deliberate.”

Pryor looked at me.

“You believe the two are connected.”

“I believe someone does.”

Silence returned.

I looked at Zeron once more.

“Did Torvin know why he was being kept alive?”

“He believed it was part of his punishment.”

“He never questioned it?”

“He complained about it. Nothing more.”

I considered everything we’d learned.

“Someone didn’t want him alive when the Council arrived.”

Whether Torvin knew something or whether someone feared he might speak no longer mattered. Someone had interfered with my judgment. That alone demanded an answer.

I rested one hand on the table.

Two problerns now stood before me, and neither could wait for the other. The Eastern Council would arrive tomorrow whether I welcomed them or not. They would expect answers before asking their first question.

Pryor understood it as well as I did.

A death top seon

“I’ll have the council chambers prepared before noon. Additional guards will be assigned immediately. Everything will be ready before the Council arrives.”

“Good.”

Before I could say anything else, Isla drew in a sudden breath. Every eye at the table turned toward her as her fingertips brushed the green seal. Something had reached her again.

The room fell completely silent. My attention remained on Islà as her expression changed. Whatever she was seeing, it wasn’t here with us. I waited for the vision to release her instead of trying to pull her away from it.

A feeling of unease settled over the room.

None of us spoke as we watched Isla. Whatever she was experiencing, it was happening somewhere beyond the walls of Wraithbone. All I could do was wait and hope whatever she found would bring us closer to the truth instead of another mystery.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 215

A warning carried in fear

(Isla)

The seal burned beneath my fingertips.

The dining room disappeared before I could pull my hand away. The voices around me vanished as though they had never been there. The floor beneath my feet no longer existed. I stood inside something that wasn’t my own memory.

Cold air surrounded me.

Dark stone walls stretched in every direction. Rain beat against narrow windows somewhere nearby. I couldn't see the room clearly because everything around me felt wrapped in fear instead of light. That fear became the only thing I could truly understand.

It wasn't mine.

It belonged to someone else. Someone breathing too fast while trying to stay quiet. Someone who believed every passing second brought death closer. The feeling pressed against me until my chest hurt.

A hand appeared.

It wasn't a face or even a full body. Only a hand holding the same letter I'd touched moments before. The fingers shook so badly the wax seal almost slipped from their grasp.

Panic swallowed everything else.

The person wasn't running to save themselves. They were trying to save someone else. Every step carried the same desperate thought again and again. The King has to know.

The words weren't spoken aloud.

They simply existed inside the fear surrounding me. They repeated without stopping. Every thought returned to Caius before racing away again. Whoever carried the letter believed he was the only person who could stop what was coming.

Another feeling crashed into me.

It wasn't fear.

It was guilt.

Heavy.

Crushing.

The person carrying the letter blamed themselves for waiting too long. They believed every delay had already cost lives. They feared there wouldn't be enough time to prevent more.

The vision shifted.

The hand disappeared.

A warning carted in fear

A long table stood before me instead. Chairs surrounded it, but every seat remained empty. One chair at The head looked different from the others, larger and carved with wolves unlike anything I'd seen before.

Something terrible had happened there.

I couldn't see it.

I couldn't hear it.

I only knew it.

The fear inside the room hadn't faded. It had soaked into the stone itself. It felt older than the letter and stronger than anything I'd touched before.

The room changed again.

A map lay spread across the table. My eyes moved across mountains, rivers, and pack territories before stopping near the eastern border. I didn't recognize every marking, but one place had been circled several times.

Then blood landed across the map.

One drop.

Then another.

Then several more.

I couldn't see where they came from.

The vision refused to show me.

The fear returned so suddenly my knees almost gave way.

Someone was begging.

Not with words.

With feeling.

Don't let them come too late.

Please.

Don't let them come too late.

The plea repeated until it became impossible to separate from everything else.

Then another emotion appeared.

Hope.

Small.

Fragile.

A waming carted in fear

The person believed there was still une chance teft. One person who could change what happened next. That hope rested entirely with Caius.

The world around me began to crack apart

The stone walls disappeared first. The table followed. The map faded beneath the falling blood until nothing remained except darkness filled with fear.

Then I heard another voice.

Not the frightened one.

Calm.

Ancient.

Female.

It seemed to come from everywhere at once.

“The truth arrives before the enemy.”

The words settled around me.

“See everything.”

“Miss nothing.”

The voice disappeared before I could answer.

The darkness shattered.

Air rushed into my lungs.

The dining room returned all at once. My hand jerked away from the seal as though it had burned me. I drew in another breath while every face around the table remained fixed on me.

Caius was already beside me.

One of his hands rested lightly against my arm. He didn't ask me to speak immediately, tie waited until my breathing settled enough for me to focus on him.

"What did you see?"

I looked at him.

"I don't know."

The answer frustrated me more than anyone else.

"I saw pieces."

"What pieces?" Pryor asked quietly.

I closed my eyes for a moment.

A warning camed in fear

"The person carrying the letter was terrified" I opened them again. "Not for themselves. For everyone else."

No one interrupted.

"They believed you had to receive the message." I looked at Caius. "They thought you were the only one who could stop whatever was coming."

The room remained silent.

"There was another place."

Every face stayed on me.

"I've never seen it before."

Caius didn't interrupt.

"It had stone walls and a large table." I searched for the right words. "There was a map showing the eastern border, and someone had circled one place several times."

“Could you read the name?” Zeron asked.

I shook my head.

“No.”

Disappointment crossed his face before disappearing.

“There was blood on the map.”

Lira looked toward Caius.

“Blood?”

“I never saw who was bleeding.” I swallowed. “The drops just… appeared.”

Another silence followed.

Then I remembered the last part.

“There was a voice.”

Caius frowned.

“A voice?”

I nodded.

“It wasn’t frightened.”

Every word came back as clearly as I’d heard it.

“It sounded old.”

I looked at Caius again.

I’

A warning carted in fear

It said, ‘The truth arrives before the enemy‘

No one spoke.

“Then it said…”

I paused.

“See everything.”

My voice became quieter.

“Miss nothing.”

The words settled over the room.

No one dismissed them.

No one treated them like imagination.

Every person there understood my gift had never spoken without reason.

I looked down at my hand.

The tingling had already begun to fade, but something inside me hadn’t. Whatever I had touched inside that seal wasn’t finished with us yet. Somehow, I knew the Eastern Council wasn’t simply bringing answers.

They were bringing the beginning of something much larger.

I couldn’t explain why.

The fear inside that letter had felt real enough, but the voice hadn’t frightened me. It had sounded like a warning instead of a threat. Whoever had spoken wanted us to survive what was coming, not fear it.

That thought stayed with me.

Torvin’s death no longer felt like the center of everything. It felt like the first move in something much larger. Whatever waited beyond the eastern border had already begun, whether we understood it or not.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 216

The path ahead

(Caius)

No one spoke after Isla finished.

The silence carried more weight than any answer we'd received that morning. Zeron remained where he was without breaking my thoughts. Pryor watched me because he already knew I was deciding what cam next.

My attention returned to Isla.

The color had begun returning to her face. She looked tired, but not in pain. Whatever her gift had shown her had taken something from her again, and I disliked how quickly those visions seemed to grow stronger.

"Can you stand?"

She nodded once.

"I'm fine."

I believed she thought she was.

That wasn't always the same thing.

I reached for the pitcher and filled a fresh cup with water before placing it in front of her. She accepted it without argument and took a small drink. Only then did I turn my attention to everyone else gathered around the table.

"The Council arrives tomorrow."

No one needed reminding.

"We don't know what they're walking into."

Pryor folded his hands behind his back.

"After what we've heard today, I'd say they know more than they're willing to put in writing."

"I agree."

The fear inside that letter hadn't belonged to someone exaggerating a problem. Isla's gift had removed any doubt I still carried. Whoever sent that message had believed lives depended on it reaching me.

I turned to Zeron.

"Return to Ashcrest before nightfall."

He nodded once.

“I’ll leave immediately.”

“I want the interviews finished before sunrise.”

The path abeat “They will be.”

“No one leaves the pack lands until I say otherwise.”

Understanding crossed his face.

“You believe the person responsible could still be there.”

“I believe the person responsible made mistakes.”

Silence followed my answer.

Every plan left something behind. Every lie created another question. Whoever poisoned Torvin hadn’t expected me to learn he died from more than the restraint.

My attention shifted to Pryor.

“Have copies made of every interview.”

“It’ll be done.”

“I want them waiting in my office before the Council arrives.”

“You’ll have them.”

He didn’t ask why.

He rarely needed to.

Lira glanced between us.

“What about the vision?”

I faced Isla again.

“The voice concerns me more than anything else.”

She met my eyes.

“You believe it was real.”

“I do.”

The room remained quiet.

“You’ve touched objects before.”

She nodded.

“I’ve felt memories.”

“You’ve felt emotions.”

“I have.”

“But you’ve never told me a voice spoke directly to you.”

The path aber-

She thought for a moment.

“No.”

“Then something changed:

She lowered her eyes briefly.

“I think so.”

No one dismissed those words.

Sera had warned us that there was still much she didn’t know about Celestial wolves. Every new ability Isla revealed only proved how little anyone truly understood them.

Beyond the windows, rain clouds gathered over the mountains.

Tomorrow those same roads would carry the Eastern Council through Wraithbone’s gates. I couldn’t get rid of the feeling that our lives had already begun changing before they’d traveled a single mile.

I turned back to Pryor.

“Keep the Council’s arrival between the senior officers.”

He nodded once.

“Understood.”

“Until they cross our borders, I don’t want unnecessary speculation spreading through the pack.”

“It’ll be handled.”

An enemy who announced himself was easier to face than one who arrived smiling. Until I understood why that letter carried so much fear, I intended to trust very little.

Zeron rose from his chair.

“If there’s nothing further, I’ll return to Ashcrest.”

“There is one more thing.”

He waited.

“If anyone asks why Torvin died, you tell them the truth.”

His attention remained on me.

“Tell them he was murdered.”

Lira frowned slightly.

“You don’t intend to keep it quiet.”

“No.”

I’d hidden enough over the years to understand the cost of silence.

“A lic would only protect the person responsible.

Neither Zeron nor Lira argued.

Both understood my reasoning.

Pryor closed the notebook he’d been writing in.

“I’ll notify every ranking officer before noon.”

“Good.”

I let my gaze move across everyone gathered around the table.

“We continue exactly as planned.”

Everyone listened.

“The Council will be welcomed with every courtesy owed their position.”

I paused briefly.

“But until I know who we’re dealing with, no one meets them alone.”

Zeron nodded.

“Lira won’t leave my sight.”

“Lira isn’t the one I’m worried about.”

My attention settled on Isla.

The room understood immediately.

If someone had killed Torvin to prevent the truth from reaching me, there was no telling what they might do if they learned a Celestial wolf could uncover secrets no ordinary investigation ever could.

I reached for Isla’s hand.

She looked at me without speaking.

“From this moment forward, you don’t go anywhere alone.”

A small smile appeared.

“I wasn’t planning to.”

That answer eased something inside me.

Not because the danger had passed.

Because she understood it had only just begun.

The meeting ended a few minutes later.

Zeron and Lira left first, already discussing the fastest route back to Ashcrest. Pryor remained only long

The path abeat enough to gather his notes before excusing himself to carry out my orders. Within moments, only Isla and Tremained in the room.

Her attention settled on the Council letter.

“They’ll be here soon.”

“I know.”

“Do you think they know someone was killed?”

“I don’t know.”

She rested one hand against the edge of the table.

“I hope they have answers.”

“So do I.”

I picked up the letter once more.

It looked no different than when Pryor had first placed it on my desk. Ordinary paper. Ordinary ink. Nothing about it suggested the fear hidden beneath its surface.

Without Isla, I never would’ve known.

That thought stayed with me.

The Council wasn’t coming because of politics alone. Someone had gone to great lengths to make certain.

I received that warning, and Torvin’s death had only deepened the mystery. Too many events had happened within the same two days, and every one of them left another question behind.

I folded the letter carefully.

“Come.”

Isla looked at me.

“Where are we going?”

“Outside.”

She smiled.

“Why?”

“Because tomorrow belongs to the Council.”

I offered her my hand.

“I’d rather spend today with my mate.”

She slipped her hand into mine without hesitation.

Together, we left the dining room behind.

Before tomonos

Before tomorrow

(Caius)

We walked side by side through the pack house without speaking. The silence between us felt easy after everything that had happened that morning. Warriors greeted us as we passed, and each one stepped aside with quiet respect. Isla’s hand remained in mine the entire time.

The courtyard came into view as we stepped outside, A cool breeze carried the scent of rain across the training grounds where several young warriors were practicing. I watched them for a moment before lifti my eyes to the mountains in the distance. The Eastern Council would soon travel those same paths to reach Wraithbone.

Isla followed my gaze toward the mountains. She didn’t ask what I was thinking because she already knew. The day ahead would change everything, whether we were feady or not. Today was the last peacef day we were likely to have for some time.

“Do you ever wish things were simpler?”

I looked at her before answering. There had been a time when I believed ruling would become easier with experience. Instead, every year brought new responsibilities and harder choices. “Sometimes, but I wouldn’t change where they brought me.”

A small smile appeared on her face before she looked ahead again, giving my words time to settle. I understood why she asked because she’d never imagined her life becoming this complicated. Neither of us had chosen the path we’d begun on. Somehow, it had still brought us here.

“And where did they bring you?”

I held her gaze for a moment before answering. Every decision I’d made since finding her had led us to this point. Standing beside her felt more certain than anything else in my life. “To you.”

She lowered her eyes, and a faint warmth reached her cheeks. The small reaction reminded me how much she'd changed since the day I found her at Ashcrest. She carried herself with quiet confidence now, even i she didn't always see it. Watching her become this woman had been one of the greatest privileges of my life.

"I changed your life."

"You saved it."

I didn't answer right away. In my mind, those two things had always been the same. I'd never regretted following the scent that led me to her.

We continued along the path without hurrying. The gardens came into view ahead, carrying the scent of fresh rain and blooming flowers. For a little while, the questions waiting inside the pack house felt farther away. I meant to hold on to that feeling while I could.

"You gave me a home."

I looked at her as she spoke. Home had never been measured by walls or land. "You became mine the moment I found you."

Before tomorrow

We reached the gardenis and slowed our pace. Flowers were beginning to bloom again after the last

Tainfall, bringing color to every path. Isla looked around with quiet appreciation. It pleased me that she still noticed the simple things.

"It's beautiful here."

I watched her instead of the gardens. Wraithbone had always been home, but seeing it through her eyes had changed the way I looked at it. "It became more beautiful after you arrived."

She lowered her head for a moment before looking back at me. Whether she believed my words or not, they remained true. Wraithbone had always been strong, but she'd brought warmth to a place that had spent years carrying only responsibility. Even the pack had changed since she became part of it.

"I think they love me more than they love their king."

"They should."

She blinked at me, clearly caught off guard by my answer. I didn't envy the place she'd earned among the pack because she'd worked for every bit of it. Watching them welcome her had only made me prouder of the wolves I led.

"Why are you being so romantic today?"

The Council would bring enough uncertainty without wasting the peace we'd been given today. "Because I don't want you remembering today for the Council."

She studied me for a moment, and I could almost see the question forming before she spoke again. She knew me well enough to recognize what I was trying to do. There was no reason to deny it.

"So this is your way of distracting me?"

"It is."

She considered my answer before turning her attention back to the gardens. The worry hadn't disappeared, but it no longer stood at the front of her thoughts. For now, that was enough.

"A little."

"I'll take a little."

The breeze carried the scent of fresh rain through the gardens. Isla drew in a slow breath before looking toward the flower beds again. The strain she'd carried since breakfast had eased, even if it hadn't disappeared completely. I considered that a good beginning.

"You always know what I need."

"I pay attention."

She held my gaze for a moment before her attention drifted back to the path ahead. We didn't always need long conversations to understand one another. The bond between us had grown stronger with every day we spent together.

The path curved toward the small pond at the center of the gardens. The water barely moved beneath the cloudy sky while a few ducks drifted across the surface. Everything felt peaceful in a way that had become increasingly rare. I wanted to remember this as much as she did.

"I don't want today to end."

I understood exactly what she meant. Once the Council arrived, our attention would belong to them and everything that followed. "Neither do I."

We stopped beside the pond in comfortable silence. The breeze stirred the trees while the ducks continued across the water without a care in the world. Duty would call us back soon enough. Until then, intended to stay exactly where I was.

“What happens after tomorrow?”

I looked at her before answering. “The Council is only one problem. We still have a murder to solve, a journal full of unanswered questions, and a gift we’re only beginning to understand. I don’t know how long it will take, but I know we’re not finished yet.”

She nodded, her eyes still resting on the pond. I appreciated that she never asked me to promise things I couldn’t control. We’d always been honest with each other, and I wanted that to remain true. Nothing we faced would ever change that.

“I know.”

She slipped her hand into mine again, and we stood there for another minute before turning back toward the pack house. The peace we’d found in the gardens would have to wait for another day. There was still work waiting for both of us.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 217

Something decan’t feel right

Cere

Something doesn’t feel right

(Caius)

By the time we reached the pack house again, the quiet we’d found in the gardens had settled both of us. It wouldn’t last, but it had been enough. The Council would arrive soon, and Wraithbone needed to be ready. There was still much to do before the sun went down.

“Alpha King, Luna.”

I looked toward the voice and found Raith waiting near the entrance with two warriors standing behind him. He inclined his head before dismissing the men with a quiet gesture. They left without question, leaving the two of us to speak while Isla remained at my side.

“The patrols have been changed as ordered,” he said.

I nodded once. Raith rarely wasted words, and I respected that about hirn. If he brought me a report, it meant everything had already been checked twice. His attention to detail had earned my trust years ago.

“Anything unusual?”

“Nothing outside the walls.”

“Only the leadership knows the Council arrives tomorrow,” Raith said. “The pack believes the extra patrols are because of Torvin’s death.”

He paused for a moment before continuing. His expression told me there was something else on his mind. I waited for him to finish.

“A few pack members have noticed more warriors around the council wing.”

“They were bound to.”

Raith accepted the answer without argument. He understood why the extra security couldn’t remain hidden forever. My concern wasn’t whether people noticed but whether they understood the reason.

“I haven’t answered their questions.”

“Good.”

There was no reason to spread unnecessary worry through the pack. They would learn what they needed to know when the time came. Until then, silence protected everyone.

I looked toward the entrance before turning back to him.

“I want trusted warriors outside the council chamber, the guest quarters, and the library.”

“It’ll be done.”

“No one enters those areas without permission.”

Raith gave a single nod. He already understood what I wasn’t saying aloud. If the journal truly held answers, I wasn’t risking anyone getting close to it before we understood what we were dealing with.

Something don’t feel right

I choose the guards myself.”

“I expected you would.”

A look of approval erossed his face before he inclined his head again. He understood responsibility better than most wolves his age. That was one of the reasons I'd made him Gamma.

After Raith walked away, Isla looked at me.

"You trust him."

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 218

She watched him disappear into the pack house before looking back at me. There wasn't a trace of doubt in her expression. She had already begun seeing the same qualities in him that I had years before.

"I can see why."

"So can I."

Together, we stepped inside. The quiet hours were coming to an end, and before long every leader in Wraithbone would have a part to play. When the Eastern Council crossed our borders, we would be ready.

Pryor was already waiting outside my office with a folder tucked beneath one arm. Lira stood beside him while Raith finished giving a final instruction to one of the warriors assigned to the council wing. The warrior hurried away, and Raith turned his attention back to us. Everything was falling into place before the Council's arrival.

As we approached, Isla's steps became slower. She looked toward the council wing without saying anything, her attention fixed on something I couldn't see. Raith noticed the change at the same time I did and remained where he was.

"Isla?"

She didn't answer immediately.

"I don't know why," she said quietly. "Something doesn't feel right."

The corridor fell silent. I trusted her gift too much to dismiss those words.

{'

I studied Isla's face for another moment. She wasn't frightened, but she wasn't imagining it either. I'd learned to trust her gift long before I understood it. Every time she'd sensed something, there had been a reason.

"What are you feeling?"

She kept her eyes on the council wing. She looked as though she was trying to listen to something only she could hear. After a moment, she shook her head.

"I don't know."

Nobody spoke. Pryor and Lira exchanged a brief look while Raith remained where he was. I waited because rushing her wouldn't change what she felt.

"It isn't pain," she continued. "It feels... wrong."

Something doesn't feel right

Pryor looked toward the corridor leading to the guest quarters. Everything had already been inspected Twice under his supervision. He looked back at Isla.

"The rooms have already been inspected."

"I know."

She finally turned to him. There wasn't any uncertainty in her voice when she spoke again. She believed what she was feeling.

"I'm not saying someone is there."

Raith stepped forward without taking his eyes off the council wing. His hand rested near the sword at his side out of habit rather than fear. He waited for my decision.

"Would you like me to search the wing again, Alpha King?"

"Yes."

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 219

He inclined his head before signaling two nearby warriors to follow him. They disappeared down the corridor without wasting a second. I looked back at Isla.

“Can you tell where it comes from?”

She closed her eyes for only a moment. When she opened them again, her attention returned to the corridor. She looked frustrated more than anything else.

“No.”

She drew in a quiet breath before meeting my eyes. I could see she wished she had a better answer. Unfortunately, this gift rarely gave us simple ones.

“It isn’t one place.”

Those words settled over all of us. I looked toward Lira before giving my next order. Until we understood what Isla had sensed, I wasn’t taking chances.

“No one enters or leaves the council wing until Raith returns.”

“It’ll be done, Alpha King.”

Lira left immediately, calling two warriors to her side as she headed toward the corridor. Pryor remained beside me, the folder still tucked beneath his arm. None of us spoke again as we waited for Raith to return with whatever he found.

The wait felt longer than it probably was. At last, Raith walked back into view with the two warriors beside him. One look at his face told me he hadn’t found what we were looking for.

“Alpha King.”

“Report.”

“We searched every room and every corridor. Nothing was out of place.”

Silence settled between us.

Something don’t feel right

Hurned to Isla.

She shook her head before I could ask.

“No.”

Her voice was quiet, but certain.

“Whatever I felt is still here.”

I looked toward the council wing again. Every report told me the same thing, yet Isla's gift refused to agree. I trusted her gift more than any report placed in my hands.

"Pryor."

"Alpha King?"

"Delay moving anything else into the council wing until morning."

He inclined his head.

"It'll be done."

I looked at Raith.

"Keep the guards where they are."

"They won't leave their posts."

Whatever Isla had sensed remained hidden. I intended to uncover it before the Eastern Council crossed our borders.

The journal–eathe

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 220

The journal calls

(Isla)

Everyone moved as soon as Caius gave the order. Pryor left to inform the servants that nothing else was to be taken into the council wing until morning. Lira gathered more warriors and quietly adjusted the guards around the corridor. I stayed beside Caius while my eyes remained fixed on the same place.

I wanted the feeling to disappear. Instead, it stayed exactly where it had been since we stepped inside. It wasn't stronger than before, but it wasn't weaker either. That worried me more than I wanted to admit.

Caius looked at me.

"Do you want to go closer?"

“I think I have to.”

He didn’t argue. He reached for my hand, and I held on without thinking. Together, we walked toward the council wing while Raith fell into step a few feet behind us. The rest of the warriors remained where they had been ordered.

The corridor felt ordinary. The walls, windows, and doors looked exactly as they had this morning. Nothing appeared damaged or out of place. If I had walked through here yesterday, I wouldn’t have looked twice.

We stopped outside the council chamber.

“Here?”

I closed my eyes for a moment. The feeling brushed against me again before slipping away just as quickly. When I opened my eyes, I shook my head.

“No.”

We continued farther down the corridor. One guest room stood open after Raith’s search, and I looked inside as we passed. The furniture was untouched, and the bed had already been prepared for tomorrow’s guests. It looked like every other room in the pack house.

Caius watched me.

“Anything?”

“No.”

Another few steps carried us to the library. The two warriors guarding the door straightened as we approached before stepping aside to allow us through. Neither of them had seen anything unusual during their watch.

The library greeted us with complete silence. Shelves filled with old books surrounded us while the afternoon light reached through the tall windows. Everything rested exactly where it belonged Even so, the feeling returned the moment I crossed the doorway.

I stopped walking.

The journalentis

“It’s here.”

Caius looked around the room. Raith checked every corner without waiting to be told. Neither of them found anything that explained what I felt.

“The books?”

Caius asked the question because he akeady knew where my thoughts had gone. Ever since we found the journal, nothing involving old records felt ordinary anymore. I wished! could tell him he was wrong.

“I don’t know.”

I walked between the shelves, letting my hand brush lightly across the edge of the wooden cases. Nothing changed. Then I reached the table where the journal had rested earlier today.

I looked down at the empty surface.

“It was here.”

Caius stepped beside me.

“The journal is in my office.”

I looked toward the door. The feeling lessened again, though it didn’t disappear completely. It was almost as if whatever I sensed had followed the journal but left something behind.

“I think we should look at it again.”

Raith looked at Caius.

“I’ll secure the office.”

Caius gave a single nod. Raith left immediately while the two warriors remained outside the library doors. No one questioned the decision because everyone understood how important the journal had become.

Caius turned back to me.

“Can you walk?”

“Yes.”

He kept hold of my hand as we left the library together. Pryor was already making his way back toward us after finishing his own task. He stopped as soon as he saw us.

“Alpha King?”

“We’re returning to the office.”

Pryor nodded once and fell into step beside us. None of us spoke during the short walk back. Every answer seemed to lead us toward the journal once again.

By the time we reached the office, Raith was already waiting outside the door with two warriors standing nearby. He opened the door as Caius approached before stepping aside. The journal rested exactly where we'd left it on the desk.

The moment I saw it, the feeling returned.

"It's stronger now."

Every eye turned toward the journal. No one reached for it

The room remained silent. Caius stepped closer to the desk without taking his eyes off the journal. Pryor and Raith stayed near the door while giving us enough space. No one wanted to disturb whatever was happening.

"Tell me what you feel."

I looked at the journal again. My chest felt heavy, but it wasn't fear. It was closer to standing outside a door that shouldn't be opened while knowing someone expected you to walk through it anyway.

"It wants us to look."

Caius looked at me.

"The journal?"

"I think so."

He rested one hand on the edge of the desk. He didn't touch the journal. He waited because he knew rushing me had never helped before.

"What makes you think that?"

I took another step closer. The closer I stood, the more the feeling settled around me. It wasn't pushing me away. It was pulling me toward the pages.

"It isn't warning me to leave."

I looked at Caius.

"It's asking me to stay."

No one spoke after that. Even Raith remained completely still behind us. The only sound came from the fire burning across the room.

Caius finally looked at Pryor.

“Close the door.”

Pryor did so immediately. The sound of the latch settling into place seemed louder than it should have.

We were alone now.

Caius turned back to me.

“You don’t have to do this.”

“I know.”

I reached toward the journal before stopping just above the cover. The feeling became stronger again, and warmth spread through my hand. My heart began to race as though the journal had been waiting for this

The journal estis moment.

“I can feel it.”

Caius moved beside me.

“If anything changes, you stop.”

“I will.”

I rested my fingertips against the old leather cover.

The warmth disappeared.

A cold feeling rushed through my hand instead. Images flashed through my mind too quickly for me to understand them. I caught broken pieces of unfamiliar faces, old stone walls, and a voice I couldn’t make out before everything vanished.

I pulled my hand back and looked at Caius.

“It showed me something.”

“What did you see?”

I shook my head.

“I don’t know.”

Before anyone could speak again, the journal opened by itself.

Every page turned on its own before stopping near the center of the book.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 221

The King’s Fate

The King’s fate

(Isla)

No one spoke.

Every eye remained fixed on the open journal. Caius stood beside me while Raith and Pryor waited a short distance away. None of us knew why the journal had opened on its own. We all understood that it meant something.

Caíus looked at me.

“Do you recognize the page?”

I stepped closer to the desk and lowered my eyes to the journal. The page looked older than the others we had already read. The writing had faded with age, but most of it was still clea enough to understand. A strange mark filled the top corner where no family crest should have been.

I studied the symbol before shaking my head. Nothing about it felt familiar to me. Even so, I couldn’t pull my attention away from it. It looked as though someone had placed it there for reason.

“I’ve never seen that mark before.”

Caius leaned closer without touching the journal. Pryor moved to the other side of the desk so he could examine the page as well. Raith remained near the door while keeping watch over the hallway. None of them spoke as they studied what the journal had revealed.

Pryor looked at Caius.

“The writing matches the earlier pages.”

“It does.”

Caius looked back at me. Questions filled his eyes even though his expression remained calm. He always chose patience before action. It was one of the reasons I trusted him completely.

“Can you read it?”

“I think so.”

road the first fowlisse

The King’s fate

Nothing about it explained why the journal had opened to this page.

Then the ink began to move beneath my eyes.

One sentence disappeared as another took its place. More words changed until the passag no longer matched what I had been reading. None of the others reacted. I realized I was the only one who could see it.

“Celestial,”

The word left my mouth before I realized I had spoken. Pryor looked at me while Caius turne his attention back to the page. Neither of them appeared to see what I had seen. Raith remained silent near the door.

“What did you say?” Pryor asked.

“The words changed.”

Caius looked down at the journal again. His eyes moved across the same lines I had just read. When he looked back at me, I already knew his answer. The page hadn’t changed for him.

“They haven’t changed for us.”

I looked at the journal again. The passage had already returned to what it had been before. The new words were gone as though they had never appeared. Only the symbol in the corner remained.

“I saw something else.”

“What did it say?” Caius asked.

“I only saw one word clearly.”

“Celestial?”

I nodded.

The feeling inside me returned before I could say anything else. It came from the journal and settled through my body. This time, there was no doubt about where it came from. The book wanted something from me.

I reached toward the page without thinking. My fingers stopped just above the parchment. Caius watched my hand before looking at my face. He didn’t try to stop me.

“It wants me to touch it.”

Calus’s name. Cold air rushed across my face.

I stood inside the council chamber.

It looked like the same chamber inside Wraithbone, but more wolves filled it than before Every one of them wore the robes of the Eastern Council. Some stood near the walls whie others gathered around the long table. Nobody seemed to notice me.

My eyes searched through the faces.

“Calus.

He stood several feet away with his sword in his hand. His attention remained fixed on the elders across from him. I tried to move toward him, but my feet refused to obey me. It felt as though the vision wanted me to watch.

One of the elders stepped forward.

“You should have listened.”

Caius didn’t lower his weapon. He looked exactly as he always did when danger stood before him. There was no fear in his face. His eyes never left the elder

“I will never stop searching.”

The King’s fate anyone else moved, I screamed his name. The sound filled the chamber

“Caius!”

His sword fell from his hand. Blood spread across the front of his shirt as he dropped to of knee. The elder pulled his weapon free before stepping back. Nobody tried to stop him

I forced my feet forward.

This time, they obeyed me. I reached Caius before he fell completely and caught him in my arms. Blood covered my hands as I lowered him to the floor. The sight of it made it difficult to breathe.

“No.”

I pressed both hands against the wound. Tears fell onto his face as I begged him to stay wi me. His eyes found mine, but the life inside them was already disappearing. I could feel his pain through our bond.

“Please.”

The elder walked toward us again. He looked down at Caius before turning his attention to me. There was no regret in his face. His voice remained calm when he spoke.

“You should have stopped searching.”

He turned his head toward the council table. The journal lay open across its surface. Its pages remained still as though it had been waiting for this moment. The elder looked back at

“Some truths should never be uncovered.”

I tried to remember his face. Every time I looked at him, his features slipped away again. No matter how hard I tried, I couldn’t see who he was. The vision refused to let me identify him.

I held Caius closer.

“No.”

The elder turned away without another word. Every member of the Council remained where they stood. None of them tried to help us. They watched as though Caius’s death meant nothing.

“Caius.”

He lifted one hand with what little strength he had left. His fingers touched my cheek before

I cried out as the council chamber disappeared.

The office came back around me without warning. My body felt too weak to remain standing The journal was still beneath my hand. Caius was reaching toward me

“Isla.”

Darkness swallowed everything. The office filled with voices I could no longer understand My knees gave way beneath me. Caius caught me before I reached the floor

“Isla.”

His voice sounded distant as darkness pulled me farther away. I wanted to tell him what I had seen, but my mouth refused to move. The image of him dying in my arms refused to leave my mind. I fought to open my eyes, but I couldn’t.

The last thing I heard was Caius calling for Sera. Then everything disappeared.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 222

A future written in blood-1

(Calus)

I caught lala before she struck the floor. Her body went limp in my arms, and for one terri second she didn’t respond when I called her name. The journal remained open on the des beside us. I lowered her carefully while Raith moved closer.

“Send for Sera.”

Raith was already at the door before I finished speaking. He ordered one of the warriors outside to find her and bring her immediately. Pryor closed the journal without touching th page Isla had placed her hand against. I kept my attention on my mate.

“Isla.”

Her eyes remained closed. Her breathing came, but it was weaker than I wanted. I pressed my fingers against the side of her neck and found the beat there. Relief came, but it did litt to lessen the fear rising inside me.

Raith returned to my side.

“Sera is coming, Alpha King.”

“Clear the corridor.”

He left again without question. I lifted Isla into my arms and carried her toward the couch. near the fire. Pryor moved the cushions aside before I lowered her onto them. Her face had lost its color.

I knelt beside her and took her hand. Her fingers felt cold against mine. I could still feel our bond, but something inside it had changed. Fear and pain rushed through it in broken pieces.

“What happened to her?” Pryor asked.

“I don’t know.”

I looked toward the journal. It had opened for her and changed before her eyes. Whatever it showed her had been powerful enough to take her consciousness. I wanted to tear the book apart and demand every answer hidden inside it.

Sera entered moments later with Raith behind her. She carried her medical bag and came straight to Isla. I moved enough to give her space but refused to release Isla’s hand. Sera took one look at my face and didn’t waste time asking unnecessary questions.

ritten in blood-1

A future written

“What happened?”

“She touched the journal.”

Sera checked Isla’s eyes before placing two fingers against her neck. She listened to her breathing and examined her hands. There were no wounds or burns where she’d touched the page. The only injury seemed to exist somewhere none of us could see.

“Did she say anything before she collapsed?”

“She called my name.”

I remembered the way she’d looked at me when the office returned around her. Terror had filled her face before her knees gave out. She hadn’t looked confused. She had looked as though she’d seen something she couldn’t escape.

Sera looked at me.

“Her body is responding as though she suffered a great shock.”

“Can you wake her?”

“I can try.”

She opened her bag and removed a small bottle. After placing a few drops on a cloth, she held it near Isla’s nose. Isla’s face moved for a second before becoming still again. Sera tried once more, but nothing changed.

“Why isn’t she waking?”

“Her body may be protecting her.”

“From what?”

“Whatever she saw.”

The answer angered me because it gave me nothing useful. I looked toward Pryor and found him watching the journal. Raith stood near the office door, keeping everyone else outside.

“That isn’t an answer.”

“It’s the only one I have.”

Her voice remained firm, and I forced myself to accept it. Sera had never hidden the truth from me, even when I disliked hearing it. If there were signs Isla was dying, she would have said so. For now, all we could do was wait.

I looked down at Isla again. Her hand rested inside mine without movement. I brushed my thumb across her fingers and tried to reach her through the bond. Nothing answered except the same fear and pain.

‘Isla.’

I sent her name through the bond. There was no reply. I tried again, putting more force behind it. The silence that followed was worse than any scream.

‘Come back to me.’

Something moved through the bond. It was small and gone before I could understand it. Isla’s fingers closed around mine for only a second. Then her hand relaxed again.

Chapter 223

A future written in blood-2

“She heard me.”

Sera looked at our joined hands.

“Then keep talking to her.”

I leaned closer to Isla and called her name again through the bond. I told her where she wa and reminded her that I was beside her. I didn’t know if the words reached her. I continued anyway

Pryor moved toward the desk.

“Alpha King, the journal must be secured.”

“Do it.”

“Should I return it to the library?”

“No.”

I looked at the book with nothing but distrust. Until I knew what it had done to Isla, it would remain where I could see it. I ordered Pryor to lock it inside the iron cabinet behind my desk. He wrapped it in a thick cloth before moving it.

The moment the journal left the desk, Isla gasped.

Her body rose from the couch as though she’d been pulled from deep water. Her eyes opened, but they didn’t seem to see me. She dragged air into her lungs and gripped my hand with both of hers. Sera moved closer while I held Isla in place.

“Isla, look at me.”

Her gaze searched the office before finding my face. The fear in her eyes struck harder than any blade. She lifted one hand and pressed it against my chest. Her fingers moved over the place where my heart rested.

“You’re alive.”

Tears filled her eyes. She threw her arms around me and held on with all the strength she had left I pulled her against me and felt her body trembling. Whatever she’d seen involved me.

“What did it show you?”

A future written blood-2

She shook her head against my chest.

“Not yet.”

I wanted the answer immediately, but I knew better than to force it from her. I held her until her breathing began to ease. Sera placed a cup of water on the table beside us. Isla refused to release me long enough to take it.

Raith moved closer to the couch.

“Alpha King, should I remove everyone from this part of the pack house?”

“Yes.”

“I’ll keep guards outside.”

“Only wolves you trust.”

He inclined his head and left to carry out the order. Pryor remained beside the locked cabinet, waiting for further instruction. Sera checked Isla again while she stayed against me. Her strength was returning, but the fear inside the bond remained.

“Isla, I need you to drink.”

She finally lifted her head. I picked up the cup and held it while she took several small drinks. Her eyes never left my face. It was as though she feared I might vanish if she looked away.

Sera sat across from us.

“Did the journal hurt you?”

“No.”

“Did you feel pain?”

“Not mine.”

uld oton myself tela noticed and looked down at written in blood-2

She told us the Eastern Council had been inside it. She described the elders standing around the table while I held a sword. Each word came carefully, but the fear behind them grew. When she stopped, I urged her to continue.

“What happened next?”

“One of them came toward you.”

“Who?”

“I couldn’t see his face.”

Pryor and Sera exchanged a look. Isla explained that the vision refused to let her remember the elder’s features. She could see the Council robes and hear his voice. Everything else disappeared whenever she tried to focus on him.

“What did he say?”

“He said you should have listened.”

I kept my expression calm for her sake. Inside, my thoughts moved through every possible meaning. The Council knew more about the journal than they’d admitted in their letter. That had already been clear, but now the danger felt closer.

Isla gripped my hand.

“You told him you would never stop searching.”

“What happened after that?”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 224

A future written in blood-3

Silence filled the office.

Sera looked at me before turning back to Isla. Pryor’s face changed, but he said nothing. I kept my attention on my mate. She needed me to remain calm.

“You fell into my arms.”

“I’m here.”

“There was so much blood.”

“It was a vision.”

“You died, Caius.”

The words struck harder than I expected. Isla looked at me as though she had watched it happen only moments ago. To her, it hadn’t felt like a possibility. It had felt real.

I cupped her face in both hands.

“Look at me.”

She did.

“I am alive, and I intend to remain that way.”

Her eyes searched mine. She wanted to believe me, but the vision had planted fear too deeply. I pressed my forehead against hers. Our bond opened between us, carrying everything I couldn’t put into words.

“What else did he say?” Pryor asked.

Isla’s eyes closed for a moment.

“He said some truths should never be uncovered.”

firmed what I’d already suspected.

A future written in blood-3

“No member enters this pack house armed.”

He inclined his head.

“I’ll see it done.”

I turned toward the door as Raith returned. He listened while I ordered every Council weapon removed at the border. Their guards would remain outside the main walls unless I approved otherwise. Raith accepted each command without hesitation.

“Double the warriors around the council chamber.”

“Yes, Alpha King.”

“Place guards near every exit.”

“It’ll be done.”

I looked back at Isla. Her fear hadn’t disappeared, but resolve had begun replacing it. She knew I wouldn’t dismiss what she’d seen. I had no intention of allowing the vision to become our future.

“The Council meeting should be canceled,” Sera said.

“No.”

Isla answered before I could. Every face turned toward her. She sat straighter while keeping one hand wrapped around mine.

“If we cancel, we’ll never know which one of them wants the journal buried.”

“You’re not going near them,” I said.

“I have to.”

“No.”

She held my gaze.

“They’re coming because of me too.”

I understood her reason, but that didn’t mean I accepted it. Isla had only just recovered from whatever the journal had done. I wouldn’t place her in a chamber with the wolves she had rofusal before I spoke again.

“After you’ve rested.”

She knew the matter wasn’t finished. So did I. For the moment, she leaned back against me and allowed Sera to continue examining her. I kept her close while my thoughts returned to the vision.

The journal hadn’t shown her an old memory. It had shown her a future that could happen inside my own walls. Whether it was a warning or a promise, I didn’t know. I would find out before any Council member came close enough to draw a sword.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 225

What we missed

What we missed

(Caius)

Sera finished examining Isla before placing the last of her supplies into her bag. She looked between us and gave a small nod. Relief crossed her face, but it didn't erase the concern in her eyes. She closed the bag before turning to me.

"She needs rest."

"I know."

"No more visions today."

"I'll make sure of it."

Sera turned to Isla.

"If anything changes, mind link me immediately. Don't send someone to get me."

"I will."

Sera left my office, leaving only Pryor, Raith, Isla, and me behind. The silence settled over us again. None of us had forgotten what Isla had seen. The vision remained at the front of every thought.

Pryor looked toward the locked cabinet.

"What would you like done with the journal, Alpha King?"

"It stays where it is."

"For how long?"

"Until I understand why it opened."

He accepted the answer without hesitation. After so many years at my side, Pryor knew when my decision wouldn't change. He gathered the papers from my desk and arranged them into neat piles. The office looked exactly as it had before, but nothing about it felt the same.

Raith stepped forward.

"I've already doubled the guards on this floor."

"Good."

“No one comes up here without permission.”

“That order has already been given.”

“I want it enforced.”

“It will be.”

I had complete confidence in him. Raith noticed things most wolves overlooked. If something escaped him once, it rarely did a second time.

My eyes returned to the locked cabinet. The journal hadn’t opened by chance. It had waited until Isla touched it, and now it had shown her a future I refused to accept.

“Pryor.”

He stepped closer.

“I want every letter the Council has sent during the last ten years.”

“I’ll gather them.”

“Bring me anything that mentions Celestials.”

“I understand.”

Raith remained near the door.

“What are your orders?”

“No Council member is ever left alone inside Wraithbone.”

“They’ll have an escort wherever they go.”

“If anyone refuses, they leave our territory.”

Raith inclined his head.

“It’ll be handled.”

I turned to Isla. Some of the color had returned to her face, but the fear hadn’t left her eyes. She was trying to hide it from me, but our bond made that impossible.

“I’m all right.”

“You don’t have to convince me.”

She reached for my hand.

“I’m trying to convince myself.”

I closed my hand around hers and drew her closer. The fear from her vision still moved through our bond, but so did her faith in me. I intended to protect both.

“You believe the vision can be changed.”

“I have to.”

“Then so do I.”

She gave my hand a gentle squeeze before looking back at the locked cabinet. The journal hadn’t simply revealed a vision. It had placed us on a path neither of us understood. Whatever it wanted from Isla had only begun.

Pryor closed the folder in his hands and met my eyes.

“I’ll begin searching the archives immediately.”

“Leave nothing out.”

“Even the oldest records?”

“Especially those.”

He inclined his head before leaving the office. The door closed quietly behind him, leaving only Raith, Isla, and me. My attention settled on the cabinet once more.

“The journal has been waiting.”

Raith looked toward it.

“And now?”

“I think it finally found what it was waiting for.”

His expression remained unreadable.

“You believe that was Isla.”

“I do.”

He considered my answer for a moment before speaking again.

“Then the Council already knows.”

“I believe they’ve known far longer than we have.”

What we missed

“And they’re coming because of it.”

“Either to take the journal or make sure no one ever learns what’s inside.”

The words settled over the office. Isla looked between us but remained silent. She didn’t need to ask what that meant.

“No one touches that cabinet except me.”

Raith gave a single nod.

“I’ll see to it myself.”

I turned back to Isla.

“I don’t want you anywhere near the council chamber.”

She met my eyes without looking away.

“I can’t promise you that.”

“You can.”

“If the vision is truly a warning, hiding won’t stop it.”

“It may keep you alive.”

“And if staying away changes nothing?”

I had no answer for that. Everything in me wanted to keep her far from the future she’d witnessed. Everything else reminded me that the vision had come to her for a reason.

“We’ll speak about it again tomorrow.”

She nodded, though I knew she hadn’t changed her mind. Our bond carried every emotion she tried to hide. I could feel her fear, but I could also feel her determination.

“You keep looking at me,” I said.

“I’m making sure you’re still here.”

I brushed my thumb across the back of her hand.

“I’m not going anywhere.”

She gave a faint smile, but it didn’t reach her eyes.

The elder’s voice returned to me once again.

What we missed

You should have listened.

Those weren’t the words of a stranger. They belonged to someone who believed they had already warned me. The only question was when that warning had been given.

“Alpha King?”

I looked at Raith.

“We’ve missed something.”

“Then we’ll find it.”

No one spoke after that. The silence gave each of us time to think about everything that had happened since the journal opened. By tomorrow, the Eastern Council would be standing inside Wraithbone, and nothing about this meeting would be ordinary.

I looked at Raith one last time.

“Keep every warrior ready.”

“They already are.”

“They’ll need to be.”

My eyes found Isla again before I looked toward the office doors. Whatever the Eastern Council intended to bring into my kingdom, they would find Wraithbone ready to meet them.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 226

A moment to rest

(Isla)

The office felt strangely quiet after everyone stopped talking. Caius stood beside me, but my thoughts refused to leave the vision behind. Every time I closed my eyes, I saw him falling all over again. I hated that I couldn't stop it from replaying in my mind.

I let my gaze wander across the shelves lining the walls. Books, maps, and records filled every space they always had. Before today, I would have thought the journal was no different from the rest. Now I knew better.

'You're thinking too much,' Vaela said.

'I can't help it.'

'Fear won't change what comes next.'"

I knew she was right. Even so, I couldn't get rid of the feeling that something was still missing. The vision had answered one question while creating a dozen more. Somewhere inside those missing pieces was the truth.

Caius slipped his hand into mine again.

"Come with me."

"Where?"

"Away from this office."

I studied him for a moment before nodding. Staying here would only pull my thoughts back to the journal. I needed to clear my mind before tomorrow arrived. If I couldn't find peace, I could at least find a moment to breathe.

We left the office together, and Raith stayed behind to guard the cabinet. I knew Caius had given the order because he trusted no one else with the journal. That alone told me how dangerous he believed it had become. Whatever waited inside those pages had already begun changing our lives.

As we walked through the pack house, wolves greeted us with respectful bows before continuing with their work. None of them knew what tomorrow would bring. I tightened my hold on Caius's hand without thinking. Before another sunrise, the Eastern Council would stand inside Wraithbone, and I had a feeling nothing would ever be the same again.

Caius led me through the pack house without letting go of my hand, Neither of us said much.

We didn't need to. The bond carried everything words couldn't.

He brought me back to our quarters before opening the door. I stepped inside while he followed behind me. The familiar space felt calmer than the office had. Some of the weight on my chest eased the moment I crossed the threshold.

‘Rest,’ Vaela said.

‘I know.’

‘You need it.’

She wasn’t wrong. The vision had taken more out of me than I wanted to admit. Even standing felt harder than it had earlier.

Caius waited until I sat down before speaking.

“I’ve already asked Dena to have one of the servants bring you something to eat.”

“You didn’t have to.”

“I did.”

I looked up at him. There wasn’t a trace of doubt in his expression. Sera had told me to take it easy, and Caius had every intention of making sure I listened.

“I’ll eat,” I said.

“I know you will.”

His answer made the corner of my mouth lift into a small smile. Even after everything that had happened today, he still found a way to make me feel safe. For a little while, I let myself stop thinking about tomorrow.

A soft knock sounded at the door a few minutes later. One of the servants stepped inside carrying a tray before placing it on the table. Fresh bread, sliced fruit, warm tea, and a bowl of soup filled the tray. After offering a respectful bow, the servant quietly left us alone again.

Caius looked at me.

“Eat.”

I picked up the spoon without arguing. If I wanted the strength to face tomorrow, I knew I had to start by listening today.

The soup was warm, and I forced myself to finish most of it before setting the bowl aside. Caius didn't rush me or remind me to eat more. He simply stayed beside me, watching with

A moment to rest quiet patience. Somehow, his presence made even the smallest task feel easier.

"Better?" he asked.

"A little."

"That's enough for today."

I looked at him and nodded. For the first time since touching the journal, I finally allowed myself to believe rest was exactly what I needed.

Caius stepped closer and brushed a strand of hair behind my ear. His touch was gentle, as though he thought I might still break if he wasn't careful. I reached for his hand before he could pull away. I wasn't ready to let go of the one thing that made everything else seem less frightening.

"You should sleep," he said.

"I will."

He nodded once, and together we walked toward our bedroom.

The moment I lay down, I felt the mattress give beneath me. My body welcomed the chance to stop moving after everything the day had demanded. Caius pulled the blanket over me before sitting on the edge of the bed. He rested one hand over mine and stayed there without saying a word.

"You don't have to stay."

"I know."

"Then why are you?"

He looked at me with the same calm certainty he always carried.

"Because this is where I want to be."

My eyes searched his face for a long moment. There wasn't any hesitation there. He meant every word as though staying beside me was the most natural thing in the world. I tightened my fingers around his hand before closing my eyes again.

“You’ve hardly rested today either,” I said quietly.

“I’ll rest after you fall asleep.”

I wanted to tell him he didn’t have to carry everything alone. Instead, I let the warmth of his hand remind me that neither of us was carrying it alone anymore.

A moment to rest

Clan

Exhaustion slowly replaced the fear that had followed me since touching the journal. Every breath became easier than the one before it. Caius never moved away from my side. Knowing he was there gave me a kind of peace I had never known before coming to Wraithbone. I no longer had to face every nightmare by myself. Tomorrow would bring its own challenges. My mind gradually grew quiet as sleep finally claimed me, and I let myself rest without fighting it.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 227

The high council arrives

The high council arrives

(Caius)

Morning came sooner than I expected. The first thing I did was look toward Isla. She was still asleep beside me, her breathing calm and steady. I hoped yesterday had given her enough rest for what lay ahead.

I slipped out of bed without waking her. After dressing, I stepped quietly out of our quarters and made my way through the pack house. Warriors were already at their assigned posts, and everyone moved with purpose. They all knew the Eastern Council would arrive today.

A quiet knock stopped me before I reached the front entrance. Raith approached and inclined his head respectfully. “Our scouts reported that the Eastern Council crossed into Wraithbone a short while ago. They should reach the pack house within the hour.”

I nodded once.

“Keep every warrior alert.”

“They’re ready.”

I looked toward the main entrance. They believed they had come to judge.

I continued toward the council chamber without slowing my pace. Servants stepped aside as I passed, while warriors greeted me with respectful bows before returning to their duties. The atmosphere throughout the pack house felt quieter than usual. Everyone knew the High Council of the Eastern Territories had come to examine the return of a Celestial. No one knew this visit carried more questions than answers. or No one knew this meeting would become far more than a formal visit.

Pryor met me outside the council chamber with several documents tucked beneath his arm. Every record I had requested the previous day had been gathered exactly as instructed. The journal remained locked away in my office, untouched since Isla’s vision. It would stay there until I decided the time was right.

“Everything is prepared, Alpha King,” Pryor said.

I gave a single nod.

“The Council will want to verify the Celestial and discuss the ancient laws.”

“They’ll have that opportunity.”

I looked toward the main entrance. They believed they had come to judge. Before they left

The high council arrives

Wraithbone, I intended to know exactly what each of them was here for.

“You left without waking me.”

I turned.

Isla stood a few feet away, fully dressed and composed. She looked as though she’d put yesterday behind her, but I knew better. The questions were still there.

“You needed the rest,” I said.

She held my gaze for a moment before walking over to stand beside me.

“How close are they?”

“Less than an hour.”

She looked toward the main entrance without saying anything else. Whatever thoughts were running through her mind, she kept them to herself. I reached for her hand, and after a moment, she slipped her fingers into mine. Together, we waited for the High Council of the

Eastern Territories to arrive.

The waiting didn't last much longer. One of the warriors stationed at the front entrance walked inside and stopped a respectful distance away. He bowed his head before speaking. Every conversation around us came to an end.

"Alpha King, the High Council has arrived."

I gave a single nod.

"Escort them inside."

"Yes, Alpha King."

The warrior bowed again before turning toward the entrance. I looked at Isla for a brief moment before offering her my arm. She accepted it without hesitation, and together we walked forward to receive our guests.

A moment later, seven figures entered the pack house. Their travel cloaks carried the colors of the Eastern Territories, and each wore the silver crest of the High Council fastened across one shoulder. They paused only long enough to take in their surroundings before their attention settled on Isla.

Silence filled the entrance hall.

I studied each of them as they looked at her. Some appeared curious. Some appeared curious. Others studied her as though comparing her to the stories preserved in the ancient

The high council arrives records. One expression held my attention a little longer than the rest, though I couldn't have explained why.

"Welcome to Wraithbone," I said.

The eldest among them stepped forward first. His silver hair rested neatly against the collar of his cloak, and his expression remained calm as he inclined his head. The others followed his example, each offering the formal greeting expected between the High Council and an Alpha King. Their eyes, however, continued returning to Isla.

"Alpha King Caius," the elder said. "Thank you for receiving us."

“You’ve traveled a long way,” I replied. “Wraithbone welcomes you.”

His gaze shifted to Isla.

“And this is the woman the old laws now recognize as the Celestial.”

“It is,” I answered before anyone else could speak.

The elder gave a respectful nod.

“We appreciate your willingness to meet with us. Matters involving the old laws are rarely simple.”

“They seldom are.”

For a moment, no one spoke. The silence wasn’t uncomfortable, but it carried the weight of everything that had brought us together. Seven council members stood before me, each carrying their own opinions about what should happen next.

I stepped aside and gestured toward the council chamber.

“Please. We have much to discuss.”

Without another word, they followed me through the pack house. I remained aware of every movement behind me. Whether they had come seeking understanding or hoping to defend the old ways, I intended to hear every word they had to say before this meeting was over.

The walk to the council chamber passed in silence. Warriors standing along the hallway lowered their heads as we went by, while servants quietly stepped aside to clear the path. The council members took in every detail of the pack house without asking a single question. I noticed more than one of them studying the banners that marked Wraithbone as the seat of the Alpha King.

When we reached the chamber, Pryor opened the doors and stood aside.

The high council arrives

“The chamber is ready, Alpha King.”

I nodded my thanks before leading everyone inside.

A long table filled the center of the chamber. Seven chairs had been arranged on one side for the council, while Isla and I would sit opposite them. The seating had been prepared before sunrise, leaving nothing to chance.

The elder looked around with quiet approval before taking his place. One by one, the others followed until all seven seats were occupied.

I waited until Isla was seated beside me before taking my own chair.

No one reached for the documents waiting on the table. No one hurried to speak.

The silence carried its own purpose.

The elder folded his hands before him and looked directly at me.

“Alpha King,” he said, “before we discuss the ancient laws, there is one matter we must address first.”

Every eye in the chamber turned toward him.

I had the feeling this meeting was about to become far more complicated than anyone expected.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 228

The truth begins

The truth begins

(Isla)

I looked around the council chamber without drawing attention to myself. Seven members the High Council sat across from Caius and me, each carrying years of authority that coul be felt without a single word being spoken. Their attention returned to me often, though no of them looked openly hostile.

I rested my hand on the table, and a second later, Caius covered it with his own beneath th edge of the table where no one else could see. The simple touch settled the last of my nerves. Whatever the Council had come to say, I wasn’t facing them alone.

The elder let the silence settle before speaking again. His eyes remained on Caius, but I ha the feeling every word that followed would affect me just as much.

“Before we begin,” he said, “I would like to introduce the members of the High Council.”

One by one, the seven gave their names.

I listened carefully, committing each one to memory. They had traveled across the Eastern Territories to see me, but I couldn't shake the feeling that this meeting was about far more than confirming I was a Celestial. Something else had brought them to Wraithbone, and sooner or later, the truth would come out.

The elder folded his hands on the table before looking from Caius to me.

"My name is Elder Sorin," he said. "I currently serve as First Chair of the High Council."

The introductions continued until every member had spoken. Some offered polite smiles, while others remained impossible to read.

When the last name was given, Sorin looked at me once more.

"Luna Isla," he said, "your appearance has changed many lives already. Today, we hope to understand the events that led to your awakening as the first Celestial seen in generations."

The chamber fell silent again as everyone waited for the meeting to truly begin.

I looked at Caius for a brief moment before returning my attention to Elder Sorin. The calm expression on his face made him difficult to read, but years of authority showed in the way he carried himself. None of the other council members interrupted him. Even among equals, it was clear they expected him to lead the discussion.

"Before we ask our questions," Sorin said, "we want you to understand that our purpose here is to establish the truth."

I met his gaze without looking away.

"So do we."

Elder Sorin gave a small nod, as though my answer was the one he had expected.

"Good," he said. "Truth is the only reason we have traveled this far."

He reached into the leather folder resting beside him and removed a single sheet of parchment. He placed it carefully on the table before folding his hands once more.

"The High Council has reviewed every report sent from Wraithbone and Ashcrest," he said "We have read the accounts, but written words can never replace hearing the truth from those who lived it."

His eyes settled on me.

"Luna Isla, would you tell us what happened?"

I looked at Caius for a brief moment before returning my attention to Elder Sorin.

“I’ll answer your questions,” I said. “But I can only tell you what I know.”

Elder Sorin inclined his head.

“That is all we ask, Luna Isla.”

I drew a breath before speaking.

“I was born in Ashcrest. For as long as I can remember, everyone believed I never received m wolf. My father told me it simply wasn’t my fate, and after enough years, I accepted it.”

I lowered my eyes for a moment before looking back at the Council.

“The day Alpha King Caius found me changed everything I thought I knew about my life.”

No one interrupted. The seven council members remained silent, waiting for me to continue.

“I spent years believing there was something wrong with me,” I said quietly. “I watched others celebrate their first shifts while nothing happened to me. Eventually, I stopped hoping.”

The memories were still painful, but I refused to let them control me.

“My father treated me like a disappointment. The rest of the pack followed his example because they believed what he told them.”

The truth begins

I glanced at Caius before looking back at the Council.

“Alpha King Caius came to Ashcrest, and my life has never been the same since.”

“I didn’t understand why he came,” I continued. “I had never met him before that day, and never expected the Alpha King to set foot in Ashcrest because of someone like me.”

I looked down at our joined hands before lifting my eyes again.

“When he found me, he didn’t ask whether I was worth saving. He didn’t question what everyone else believed.”

I smiled faintly.

“He broke my chains and brought me to Wraithbone. More than that, he gave me a choice.

“I chose to stay,” I said. “No one demanded it. No one forced me. The decision belonged to me.”

My eyes met Caius’s for a brief moment before I looked back at the Council.

“Everything that happened after that happened because I was free to decide my own future

The chamber remained quiet.

“I found my wolf. I found my mate. I discovered that much of what I believed about my life wasn’t true.”

I drew a careful breath.

“Since then, I’ve been trying to learn who I really am.”

Silence settled over the chamber once again. Most of the council members remained focused on me, but Elder Evander leaned forward in his chair. His expression was calm, though there was something about the way he watched me that I couldn’t explain.

“May I ask you something, Luna Isla?” Elder Evander said.

I nodded.

“Before Alpha King Caius found you, did anyone ever come to see you? Someone who wasn’t from Ashcrest?”

I frowned.

The question caught me off guard.

“No,” I answered honestly. “Why would you ask me that?”

The truth begins

Elder Evander held my gaze for a moment before giving a small nod.

“The smallest details are often the most important.”

The chamber fell silent once more.

Chapter 229

Questions without answers

(Isla)

Elder Sorin looked toward Elder Evander before returning his attention to me.

“Thank you, Luna Isla.”

He let a few moments pass before speaking again.

“You’ve answered every question honestly.”

“I’ve tried to.”

“We believe you have.”

Elder Halvon rested both hands on the table.

“You’ve told us what happened after Alpha King Caius found you. Now I want to ask about what happened before.”

I looked at him.

“What do you want to know?”

“During those years in Ashcrest, did anyone ever ask to see you alone?”

I thought back.

Faces came and went in my mind, but none of them stood out.

“No.”

“Not a healer?”

I shook my head.

“No.”

“Not a council messenger?”

“No.”

Halvon studied me for a moment.

“Not even once?”

“Never.”

Questions without answers

He leaned back in his chair.

“That is interesting.”

Elder Sorin looked toward him.

“You believe someone kept her hidden.”

“I believe someone wanted her forgotten.”

No one spoke after that.

The words settled over the table.

Elder Evander broke the silence.

“If Luna Isla is telling the truth, and I believe she is, then this was more than neglect.”

Another council member nodded.

“An entire pack accepted that she had no wolf.”

“They accepted what they were told,” Halvon replied.

My eyes moved from one elder to another.

“I don’t understand.”

Elder Sorin looked at me with a calm expression.

“Neither do we.”

He folded his hands again.

“But every answer you give removes another piece of the lie.”

Another council member opened the folder in front of him.

“There is one matter we would like to clarify.”

I waited.

“When Alpha King Caius brought you to Wraithbone, did anyone attempt to persuade you to return to Ashcrest?”

I shook my head.

“No.”

Questions without answers

“No messages?”

“None.”

“No visitors?”

“None.”

The chamber grew quiet as Elder Sorin looked around the table.

“That is unusual.”

I frowned.

“Why?”

“Because once news of your awakening began to spread, we expected someone from Ashcrest to make some effort to bring you back before the truth became known.”

I looked at Caius

“No one came.”

“I believe you,” Elder Sorin said. “That answer tells us as much as any report we have received.”

Before anyone else could speak, Elder Halvon leaned forward.

“Or it tells us we still don’t have the full picture.”

The chamber fell silent again.

Halvon looked directly at me.

“Luna Isla, I don’t believe you’re hiding anything from us. But there are still pieces missing, and until we find them, we shouldn’t be too quick to draw conclusions.”

Elder Sorin gave a small nod.

“That is why every member of this Council is here. We will hear every account before we reach our final judgment.”

No one argued.

The discussion was far from over.

Elder Sorin rose first.

“We will take time to review what we have heard before continuing.”

I stood with Caius.

At the door, I glanced back once.

Most of the elders were already looking through their documents.

Evander was the only one still watching me.

He looked away the moment our eyes met.

I said nothing.

We stepped into the hallway without speaking.

The doors closed behind us.

I looked at Caius.

“Did I say something wrong?”

He shook his head.

“No.”

“Then why do I feel like they know something they aren’t telling us?”

His expression remained calm.

“They know pieces of the truth. They’re trying to figure out how those pieces fit together.”

I looked back at the closed doors.

“I think one of them was watching me.”

“I noticed.”

His answer caught me off guard.

“So did I.”

He stayed quiet until we were farther down the hallway.

“You noticed who it was.”

I looked at him.

“Evander.”

Questions without answers

“Yes.”

Neither of us said anything after that.

I kept thinking about the way he’d watched me before we left.

There had been something in his eyes that I couldn’t explain.

The more I thought about it, the less I liked it.

We reached our quarters a short time later.

Pryor was waiting outside.

The moment Caius saw him, I knew something had happened while we were with the Council.

Pryor gave Caius a respectful nod but didn’t speak.

Caius looked at me.

“Give me a moment.”

I nodded

“I’ll be inside.”

He waited until I stepped through the door before turning back to Pryor.

I didn’t try to listen.

If it was something I needed to know, Caius would tell me.

I sat on the bed and let out a long breath.

The Council had left me with more questions than answers.

Now Pryor had arrived with something else.

I didn’t know how any of it fit together yet.

I only knew it wasn’t over.

fading away again.

I just didn’t know how much longer they would stay hidden

I couldn’t sit still.

I crossed the room before turning back again.

Evander’s face stayed in my mind no matter how hard I tried to think about something else

He had looked at me like he was searching for something.

Or remembering something.

I didn’t know which

A moment later, I heard footsteps outside

I turned toward the door before I realized I was holding my breath

The footsteps came closer

Then they stopped

I looked at the door without moving

Whatever waited on the other side, I knew it was about to change everything

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Hidden motives

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 230

Hidden motives

(Isla)

A knock came at the door.

I waited a moment before crossing the room and opening it.

One of Wraithbone's warriors stood outside. Beside him was Elder Evander with his hand folded in front of him.

The warrior inclined his head.

"Luna Isla, Elder Evander requested a few moments of your time. Alpha King Caius hasn't returned yet, so I remained with the Elder."

I looked at Evander.

"What did you want to speak to me about?"

"It won't take long," he replied. "If you're willing."

I stepped into the hallway but stayed close to the doorway.

"What is it?"

He watched me for a moment before speaking.

"Has your wolf ever spoken a name you didn't recognize?"

The question surprised me.

I searched my memories.

Vaela had shared thoughts, feelings, memories, and warnings with me since she awakened.

But never a name I didn’t know.

I shook my head.

“No.”

“You’re certain?”

“Yes.”

He gave a small nod.

Judden motives

“If she ever does, I would appreciate knowing.”

I frowned.

“Why?”

“There are still things about Celestial wolves that history doesn’t explain.”

His answer sounded simple enough.

Even so, it didn’t explain why he had come looking for me after the Council meeting just to ask that question.

He inclined his head again.

“Thank you, Luna Isla.”

He turned and walked away.

The warrior remained where he was until the Elder disappeared around the corner. Only then did he nod respectfully before following after him.

I closed the door and remained where I was for a moment.

The hallway had already gone quiet.

Even so, Elder Evander’s question stayed with me.

Why would he ask about names?

Vaela had shared many things with me since she awakened. I’d seen memories through her eyes and heard her voice more than once.

Never had she spoken a name that meant nothing to me.

I walked over to the window and looked across the training grounds.

Warriors moved between buildings while others remained on watch around the pack house.

Everything appeared normal.

Yet I couldn’t shake the feeling that something had shifted.

The door opened behind me.

I turned and found Caius walking inside.

He closed the door before looking at me.

Hidden motives

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 231

His expression told me his conversation with Pryor hadn’t been ordinary.

“What did Pryor want?” I asked.

Caius was quiet for a moment.

“He told me Elder Evander requested access to Wraithbone’s royal archives before today’s session.”

I looked at him.

“For what?”

“Every record connected to the Celestial.”

I frowned.

“He asked before the Council even questioned me?”

Caius nodded.

“According to Pryor, he wanted access before anyone had heard your testimony.”

“Did Pryor allow it?”

“No.”

I studied him.

“Do you think that’s why he came here?”

“I don’t know.”

His expression remained thoughtful.

“But I don’t believe the timing was a coincidence.”

I nodded once.

“There’s something else.”

His attention settled fully on me.

“What is it?”

“Elder Evander came here while you were with Pryor.”

His expression changed.

“He spoke to you alone?”

“The warrior stayed with us, but yes.”

“What did he ask?”

“He wanted to know if Vaela had ever spoken a name I didn’t recognize.”

His eyes narrowed.

“Those were his exact words?”

“Yes.”

“And you told him no?”

“I did.”

He was silent for a moment.

“That wasn’t a question the Council needed answered.”

“What do you mean?”

“He didn’t ask as a council member.”

He met my eyes.

“He asked because he wanted to know something no one else knew.”

I considered that.

“You think he already expected a certain answer?”

“I do.”

“Then why ask me at all?”

“To see if you confirmed what he already suspected.”

I nodded.

“But I didn’t.”

“No.”

His voice remained calm.

“Which means he left this room without what he came for.”

I folded my arms.

“What if he asks again?”

“Then you answer him the same way.”

“And if Vaela ever does speak a name I don’t know?”

He didn’t answer immediately.

“Then you tell me first.”

I looked at him.

“Not the Council?”

“Not until we understand what it means.”

I gave a small nod.

“Do you trust Elder Evander?”

Caius let out a quiet breath.

“I trust very few people with something this important.”

He glanced toward the window.

“After what Pryor told me and what you’ve shared, I’m not willing to ignore either of those conversations.”

I understood.

He wasn’t ready to accuse Elder Evander of anything.

But he was no longer willing to dismiss what had happened.

I looked back out the window.

“So what do we do now?”

“We wait for the next Council session.”

“That’s all?”

“For now.”

Waiting wasn’t easy.

Hidden motives

Every answer uncovered another question.

Every discovery pointed toward something that had been hidden for years.

Caius reached for my hand.

“We don’t need to solve everything today.”

I looked at him.

“But we won’t stop looking.”

“Never.”

I smiled faintly and gave his hand a gentle squeeze.

Whatever Elder Evander was searching for, he wasn’t the only one looking anymore.

Caius had already started asking questions of his own.

And I had a feeling the answers were closer than any of us realized.

I stood beside him for another moment.

The questions hadn’t disappeared.

If anything, there were more of them now.

But something had changed.

We weren’t searching in the dark anymore.

The Council was asking questions.

Pryor was searching the archives.

Caius was putting the pieces together.

Sooner or later, someone would make a mistake.

And when they did, the truth would finally have nowhere left to hide.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 232

The missing-letters-

The missing letters

(Isla)

The next morning came quickly.

I woke before Caius and sat quietly for a while. My thoughts returned to Elder Evander and the question he had asked me yesterday. The more I thought about it, the less sense it made.

Caius opened his eyes a few minutes later.

He looked at me before sitting up. “You didn’t sleep much.” It wasn’t a question.

“I kept thinking about yesterday.”

“So did I.”

Neither of us needed to say what we meant.

A knock sounded at the door.

“Come in,” Caius said.

One of the warriors stepped inside.

He inclined his head respectfully. “Alpha King, Luna Isla, the Council has gathered. Elder Sorin has asked me to escort you to the council chamber.”

“We’ll be there shortly,” Caius replied.

The warrior bowed before leaving.

I looked at Caius.

“Do you think Pryor found anything?”

“I wouldn’t be surprised.”

“You think that’s why the Council called us back so early?”

“It could be.”

He stood and reached for his jacket.

“If Pryor requested time before today’s session, he found something worth presenting.”

A short time later, we left our quarters.

Two warriors took their places behind us as we walked through the pack house. Pack members stepped aside as we passed, lowering their heads respectfully. Quiet conversations stopped until we had gone by.

The doors to the council chamber stood open.

Every council member was already seated around the long table. Pryor stood beside Caius's chair with

The missing letters several old ledgers stacked neatly beside him. Their worn covers showed they had been preserved for many years.

Sorin looked up as we entered.

"Alpha King Caius. Luna Isla

Caius inclined his head.

"Elders."

We took our seats.

Pryor remained standing beside the table.

Sorim looked toward him.

"You requested time before today's proceedings."

"I did."

"You may begin."

Pryor rested one hand on the oldest ledger.

"Following yesterday's request, I searched Wraithbone's royal archives for every surviving record connected to the Celestial."

He opened the first ledger carefully.

"Some of these records are centuries old. Others are/copies made after the originals began to fade."

The chamber remained quiet.

Even Elder Evander watched Pryor closely.

Pryor turned another page.

"Every record agrees on one point."

He looked around the table.

“Every known Celestial was identified as a child.”

No one interrupted.

“From that moment forward, they were placed under the protection of their King.”

He closed the ledger.

“None disappeared.”

I looked at Caius.

Nothing about my life matched what Pryor had just described.

The missing letters

Serin leaned forward slightly.

“So Luna Isla’s case stands apart from every known record.”

“It does.”

“There is no example like this?”

“No, Elder.”

Halvon folded his hands.

“Then someone made certain history did not unfold as it always had.”

No one disagreed.

Pryor opened another ledger.

“I also searched every report exchanged between Wraithbone and neighboring territories concerning unusual births and rare bloodlines.”

He removed an aged document from between the pages.

“There is no report concerning Luna Isla.”

Sorin studied the page.

“So Wraithbone was never informed.”

“No.”

Pryor looked around the chamber.

“Nor was any neighboring territory.”

Evander spoke for the first time.

“If Ashcrest concealed her existence, that would explain the missing report.”

Halvon turned toward him.

“It explains one missing report.”

He paused briefly.

“It does not explain how an entire pack kept the existence of a Celestial hidden for nearly two decades.”

The chamber fell silent again.

Pryor reached for the final ledger.

“There is one more matter.”

Every eye turned toward him.

“I found references to correspondence exchanged between Wraithbone and the Council regarding the

The missing letters

Celestial.”

He rested his finger on the page.

“The index lists seven letters

He looked up.

“The letters themselves are gone.”

No one spoke.

Sorin broke the silence.

“Gone?”

Pryor nodded once.

“I searched every section of the archives twice.”

His voice remained calm.

“I found no trace of them.”

A thoughtful silence settled over the council chamber.

Yesterday we had searched for answers.

Today we had discovered that someone had gone to great lengths to make sure those answers could never be found.

Halvon looked from one elder to another.

“Seven letters don’t simply disappear.”

“No,” Sorin agreed. “They do not.”

Pryor closed the ledger before him.

“The archives show no sign of damage. Nothing else connected to that period is missing. Only those seven letters.”

The words settled over the chamber.

Every elder seemed to be thinking the same thing.

Someone had removed them.

Evander remained calm.

“If the letters are gone, then perhaps they were misplaced long ago.”

Halvon looked at him.

“Seven separate letters?”

ADD

The missing fettere

“It is possible.”

“It is convenient.”

The two elders held each other’s gaze.

Neither looked away.

Caius finally spoke.

“If those letters existed, then someone believed they were important enough to preserve.”

He rested one hand on the table.

“If they no longer exist, someone believed they were important enough to remove.”

No one argued with him.

Sorin nodded slowly.

“I agree.”

He looked toward Pryor.

“Can you determine when they disappeared?”

Pryor shook his head.

“The archive index confirms they were received.”

He rested his hand on the ledger.

“It does not record when they were removed.”

Halvon frowned.

“Then whoever did this understood how the archives were organized.”

“They would have had to.”

The answer came from Pryor without hesitation.

I looked around the table.

Every elder wore a thoughtful expression.

Even those who had spoken very little now seemed to understand the importance of what we had learned.

The missing letters weren’t an accident.

Someone had chosen to erase them.

Sorin folded his hands.

“We now have two facts.”

The missing letters

He looked around the chamber.

“A Celestial disappeared despite every historical safeguard.*

His eyes settled on the ledgers.

“And records connected to the Celestial have vanished.”

The chamber remained silent.

Neither fact could be ignored.

Evander spoke again.

“Neither proves wrongdoing.”

“No,” Sorin replied.

“But neither can be dismissed.”

He looked toward Caius.

“Alpha King, Wraithbone has our gratitude for opening its archives.”

Caius inclined his head.

“You will have access to anything else you require.”

Sorin nodded.

“Then today’s session will conclude here.”

He looked around the table one last time.

“Tomorrow we will hear from another witness.”

No one questioned the decision.

As the elders rose from their seats, I found my eyes drifting toward Elder Evander.

He met my gaze for only a moment before turning away.

It wasn’t enough to prove anything.

But after everything that had happened yesterday and everything we’d heard today, I couldn’t ignore one thought.

Someone had worked very hard to hide the truth.

And whoever it was had just become a little more difficult to trust.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 233

The first witness

(Caius)

The Council gathered once again the following morning. The mood inside the chamber had changed since yesterday. No one spoke as the elders took their seats around the table. Every face carried the same question.

Pryor stood beside my chair with another folder in his hands. He waited until Sorin acknowledged him before taking a single step forward. The silence in the chamber grew heavier with every passing moment. I could tell he had come prepared.

Sorin looked around the table.

“Yesterday we uncovered missing records. Today we will hear from someone connected to those records.”

He turned toward Pryor.

“You requested this witness. You may proceed.”

Pryor inclined his head.

“Thank you, Elder.”

He placed the folder on the table before him.

“While reviewing Wraithbone’s archives, I found the name of a former Ashcrest official whose duties placed him in direct contact with Rodan’s office. He agreed to appear before the Council after learning why this investigation had begun.”

Pryor looked toward the doors.

“If the Council permits, I would like to call Amos Vale.”

Every eye in the chamber turned as the doors slowly opened.

An elderly man stepped through the doorway with the help of one of our warriors. His hair had turned completely white, and the years showed plainly across his face, but there was nothing uncertain about the way he carried himself. He stopped a few feet from the Council table before bowing respectfully.

“Pryor,” Sorin said, “introduce the witness.”

Pryor opened the folder.

“This is Amos Vale. He served Ashcrest as its chief record keeper for twenty eight years before retiring six years ago. His responsibilities included maintaining official records, receiving correspondence, and documenting matters that passed through Alpha Rodan’s office.”

Halvon studied the man carefully.

“You understand why you have been called before this Council?”

“I do,” Amos answered. “I was told the Council is investigating matters connected to Luna Isla.”

The first witness

“You understand that everything you say here will become part of the official record?”

“I do.”

Sorin gave a single nod.

“Then speak truthfully.”

“I intend to.”

The chamber became silent once more.

Pryor stepped aside.

“Master Vale, during your years serving Ashcrest, did official correspondence addressed to Alpha Rodan pass through your office before reaching him?”

Amos nodded.

“Almost all of it did.”

“Almost?”

“Yes.”

His answer caused several elders to exchange quiet looks.

Pryor kept his attention on Amos.

“Explain.”

Amos folded his hands in front of him.

“Most letters arrived through normal channels. They were entered into the record before being delivered to Alpha Rodan.”

“And the others?”

“They never reached my desk.”

A quiet murmur spread around the table before fading again.

Halvon spoke next.

“How many are we talking about?”

“I cannot give an exact number. Over the years, I became aware of several letters that were delivered directly to Alpha Rodan without passing through the record office.”

“Who delivered them?”

“I never learned their names. They arrived alone, carried sealed Council markings, and requested Alpha Rodan personally.”

Sorin watched him carefully.

The first witness-

“Did that concern you?”

“At the time, I believed they were confidential Council matters.”

Pryor looked at him

“When did you begin to think otherwise?”

Amos let out a quiet breath.

“When I realized those letters were never entered into Ashcrest’s official records.”

The chamber fell silent once again.

No one needed Pryor to explain why that mattered.

Every official communication was supposed to leave a record.

Those letters hadn’t.

Evander broke the silence.

“That is unusual, but not unheard of. Sensitive Council matters have occasionally been delivered directly to an Alpha.”

Halvon turned toward him.

“Sensitive matters are still recorded.”

“They should be.”

“Then why weren’t these?”

Evander spread his hands.

“We don’t know that they weren’t. Ashcrest’s records may simply be incomplete.”

Amos looked at him.

“They were incomplete.”

Every eye shifted back to the old record keeper.

“I reviewed the archives myself before retiring. I searched for those letters because I wanted to close the gaps in our records.”

“And?” Sorin asked.

“I found nothing.”

Pryor folded his hands behind his back.

“So neither Wraithbone nor Ashcrest retained copies.”

“No.”

The first vulness

Amos lowered his head briefly.

“It was as though they had never existed.”

A thoughtful silence settled over the chamber.

I looked from Amos to Evander.

The elder’s expression remained composed, but he answered more quickly than he had yesterday. Each time the missing letters were mentioned, he was the first to offer another explanation.

I couldn’t prove it meant anything.

Still, I found myself wondering why he seemed so determined to make the Council believe the missing records were nothing more than an unfortunate mistake.

I broke the silence.

“Master Vale.”

He turned toward me at once.

“Alpha King.”

“When my investigation began at Ashcrest, every record connected to pack discipline and official decisions was placed before my Head of Counsel.”

Pryor gave a small nod.

“We found no copies of the letters Wraithbone’s archives referenced.”

I looked back at Amos.

“If those letters had followed normal procedure, would copies have remained in Ashcrest’s records?”

“Yes, Alpha King.”

“Even if the originals had been sent elsewhere?”

“Yes. A record of their arrival should still have existed.”

I folded my hands on the table.

“So the absence of those records was not normal.”

“No.”

“It could not be explained by age alone?”

“No.”

I studied him for a moment.

“During my investigation, we found no evidence that Ashcrest’s archives had suffered a fire, flood, or theft.

Did any event occur during your years there that could explain official records disappearing?”

The first witness

“None

“So someone removed them.”

“That would be my conclusion.”

The words settled over the chamber.

Halvon leaned forward.

“Did Alpha Rodan ever explain why those letters bypassed your office?”

Amos shook his head.

“He only told me they were not my concern.”

“And you accepted that?”

“I did.”

“You never questioned him?”

“I questioned him once.”

Every elder looked at him.

“He told me some orders were too important to be written where ordinary wolves might read them.”

Silence returned.

I looked toward Evander.

“What do you make of that, Elder Evander?”

Evander met my gaze without hesitation.

“It tells us Rodan abused his authority.”

“And nothing more?”

“No.”

I held his gaze another moment before looking away.

Perhaps he was right. Or perhaps someone had understood that the easiest way to bury the truth was to erase every record that could lead back to it.

Either way, the investigation had become far more troubling than missing letters alone.

The truth takes shape

The truth takes shape

(Caius)

Sorin looked toward Amos once more.

“You’ve told us how the letters arrived.

He paused briefly.

“Tell us what happened after Alpha Rodan received them.”

Amos thought for a moment before answering.

“He always dismissed everyone.”

“Everyone?”

“Yes, Elder.”

“Even you?”

“Especially me.”

The old record keeper lowered his eyes.

“He would remain alone for some time. When he finally called me back, the letters were gone.”

Pryor spoke.

“Gone?”

“Yes.”

“What did you assume had happened to them?”

“I believed he had secured them with his private papers.”

“And later?”

“I searched every place where those papers should have been stored.”

He looked around the chamber.

“I never found a single one.”

Halvon frowned.

“So every letter delivered outside normal procedure vanished.”

“Yes.”

I leaned forward slightly.

“Did Alpha Rodan’s behavior ever change after receiving one of those letters?”

Calm

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 234

The truth takes shape

Amos hesitated.

“It did.”

“Explain.”

“He became more cautious.”

“In what way?”

“He gave fewer written orders. More instructions were delivered by word of mouth. Even routine matters stopped appearing in the official records.”

No one interrupted him.

I exchanged a brief glance with Pryor.

That wasn’t poor record keeping.

It was an intentional change in how Ashcrest operated.

I broke the silence.

“Master Vale, I have a question.”

Amos looked at me.

“Yes, Alpha King.”

“When Alpha Rodan postponed my visit to Ashcrest, did you notice any change in how the pack was being run?”

He nodded slowly.

“I did.”

“Explain.”

“He became harder to reach. Fewer meetings were recorded. More instructions were given in private, and only to wolves he trusted.”

I remembered the reports Zeron had given me before we rode to Ashcrest.

Three cancelled visits.

One excuse I had already proved was false.

Another that had never made sense.

Then no excuse at all.

I looked back at Amos.

“Did those changes become more noticeable with each delay?”

“Yes, Alpha King.”

The truth takes shape

Halvon leaned forward.

“So while the King’s inspection was being delayed, official records were disappearing.”

“That is correct.”

Evander spoke calmly.

“Or Alpha Rodan simply became more secretive over time. We should be careful not to connect unrelated events.”

I met his eyes.

“When I finally reached Ashcrest, Alpha Rodan lied about a border dispute that never existed. He attempted to explain away concentrated wolfsbane on his land. He tried to prevent me from inspecting the eastern grounds alone.”

The chamber remained silent.

“Now we have heard that, during the same period, written orders became rare, private meetings increased, and Council letters disappeared.”

My eyes moved around the table.

“Any one of those facts could be dismissed on its own.”

I paused.

“Together, they cannot.”

No one answered.

Even Evander remained silent.

The truth was still incomplete.

But it was finally taking shape.

Sorin looked from Amos to the rest of the Council.

“The witness has established a clear sequence of events.”

He folded his hands on the table.

“Secret correspondence arrived. Official records became incomplete. Written orders became less common.”

Halvon nodded.

“And the King’s inspection was delayed until it could no longer be postponed.”

“That is also established,” Sorin replied.

Evander remained composed.

“We should remember that Alpha Rodan is no longer here to explain his decisions.”

The truth takes shape

“He was given that opportunity,” I said.

Every eye turned toward me.

“I questioned him before judgment was passed. He offered explanations for the delays, the false border dispute, and the wolfsbane on Ashcrest land.”

I let the silence settle over the chamber

“None of those explanations survived investigation.”

Pryor opened another page in his notes.

“Then today’s testimony supports what was already discovered.”

“It does.”

I looked at Amos once more.

“You have not accused anyone.”

“No, Alpha King.”

“You have simply told us what you witnessed.”

“Nothing more.”

I nodded once.

“Sometimes that is enough.”

Silence settled over the chamber again.

Rodan had already answered for his crimes.

This hearing was no longer about him.

It was about discovering who had stood behind him all along

Sorin looked toward Amos.

“Master Vale, the Council thanks you for your honesty.”

Amos bowed.

“I have told you everything I know.”

“I believe you have.”

Pryor closed his folder.

“I have no further questions.”

“Nor do I,” Halvon said.

Sorin looked around the chamber.

The truth takes shape

“Does any member of the Council wish to question the witness further?”

No one spoke.

Even Evander remained silent.

Sorin gave a single nod.

“Your testimony is concluded.”

Amos bowed once more before an attendant escorted him from the chamber.

The doors closed behind him.

My eyes moved around the table.

Some elders looked troubled.

Others were deep in thought.

Each of them was weighing the testimony against everything they already knew.

Only Evander remained unreadable.

His expression hadn’t changed since the hearing began.

Sorin leaned back in his chair.

“The witness has given us much to consider.”

“He has,” Halvon agreed.

Pryor gathered the documents into neat stacks.

“I will prepare today’s testimony for the official record.”

“Do so,” Sorin said.

He looked around the chamber.

“We have reached a suitable point to suspend today’s session.”

Several elders nodded.

“The Council will recess for one hour.”

He struck the gavel once.

“This hearing will resume afterward.”

Chairs scraped across the stone floor as the elders stood.

Quiet conversations began throughout the chamber.

Pryor remained beside the evidence table, arranging the documents while Halvon spoke quietly with another elder.

Lerossed toward Isla.

She had remained silent throughout the hearing.

The strain of the past few days showed on her face.

As she stepped away from her chair, her foot caught the edge of the raised platform.

She stumbled.

“Isla.”

I reached for her.

Evander caught her hand before I could.

The instant their skin touched, Isla froze.

Every trace of expression disappeared from her face.

Her eyes lost focus.

She wasn’t seeing the chamber anymore.

She was seeing something else.

I knew that look.

She wasn’t stumbling anymore.

She was having a vision.

“Isla?”

She didn’t answer.

Her fingers tightened around Evander’s hand.

Evander frowned but didn’t let go.

No one moved.

No one understood what was happening.

But I did.

The vision had already begun.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 235

The Conspiracy

The Conspiracy

(Isla)

Everything vanished.

The chamber disappeared until nothingxemained except silence. Cold stone stretched beneath my feet and the light from several torches spread across walls I had never seen before. The air carried the scen of old parchment and burning oil.

I wasn’t standing in the present.

I was standing inside another vision.

A man stood with his back to me.

Even before he turned, I knew who it was.

Elder Evander.

He looked younger, but there was no mistaking him. His robes were simpler than the ones he wore now, and his face held none of the warmth he showed the Council. This was the man hidden beneath the mas

Another figure entered the chamber.

Rodan.

He stopped several steps away and lowered his head.

“You sent for me, Elder.”

Evander turned to face him.

“I did.”

His voice remained calm.

“The reports from Ashcrest concern me.”

Rodan frowned.

“The girl?”

Evander met his eyes.

“She is beginning to change.”

My breath caught.

They weren’t speaking about someone else.

They were speaking about me.

Rodan lowered his voice.

“Why does one child concern the Council?”

Evander’s expression never changed.

“Because she is not simply a child.”

“What is she?”

Evander remained silent for several moments.

“Someone who must never become what she was born to be.”

Rodan studied him.

“You still haven’t answered my question.”

“You don’t need the answer.”

Rodan held Evander’s gaze.

“If I don’t know what she is, how am I supposed to stop her?”

“You will follow my instructions.”

“And if I refuse?”

Weye

Evander’s eyes turned cold.

“You won’t.”

“You’re certain of that?”

“I know exactly the kind of man you are.”

He stepped closer.

“You value your position. Your pack. Your family’s future.”

A long silence passed between them.

“Do what I tell you,” Evander said.

“Ask no more questions.”

“You will be rewarded for your loyalty.”

A chill spread through me.

Rodan wasn’t leading this.

He was obeying.

Rodan lowered his eyes.

“What exactly do you want me to do?”

The Conspuacy

Evander answered without hesitation

“You will watch her.”

“And when that is no longer enough?”

“You will increase the wolfsbane.”

Rodan remained silent.

“If she still continues to awaken?”

Evander’s face became unreadable.

“Then you will ensure she never completes her first shift.”

Rodan drew a breath.

“Even if she suffers?”

Evander didn’t blink.

“Her suffering is a small price to pay for preserving the future.”

A cold weight settled inside me.

He had known exactly what would happen to me.

He simply hadn’t cared.

Rodan didn’t answer immediately.

“What happens if someone discovers the truth?”

Evander gave a quiet laugh.

“No one will.”

“The King?”

“He has no reason to search for a nameless child.”

Rodan remained still.

“And if he does?”

Evander’s confidence never wavered.

“Then you will make certain he finds nothing.”

A knot formed in my chest.

This hadn’t been desperation.

It had been a carefully planned deception from the very beginning.

Rodan looked at the floor.

“How long?”

Evander answered as though the question carried no weight.

“For as long as necessary.”

“Years?”

“If that is what it requires.”

Rodan lifted his eyes again.

“And if she never awakens?”

“Then she remains exactly where she is.”

A long silence settled between them.

“No one outside Ashcrest can ever learn she exists,” Evander said. “No records. No messages. No witnesses.”

Rodan gave a slow nod.

“It will be done.”

My chest tightened.

He hadn’t imprisoned me because he feared me.

He had imprisoned me because Evander had ordered him to erase me from the world.

Evander turned away from Rodan.

“There is one more matter.”

Rodan waited.

“The child must never appear in your records.”

“My records?”

“Her name is to disappear.”

Rodan frowned.

“What if someone asks about her?”

“You tell them she was never worth recording.”

A silence followed.

“If another elder comes to inspect Ashcrest?”

Evander looked back at him.

“Then they will see exactly what you choose for them to see.”

A cold feeling spread through me.

He hadn’t only hidden me.

He had planned to erase every trace that I had ever existed.

Rodan remained quiet for several moments.

“What if the child asks questions?”

Evander’s expression stayed calm.

“Then she is given no answers.”

“And if others begin to pity her?”

“They won’t.”

“How can you be certain?”

“Because you will make an example of anyone who does.”

Rodan lowered his head.

“You want the entire pack to believe she is nothing.”

“I want them to believe she deserves nothing.”

The words settled over the chamber.

“If no one believes she deserves compassion,” Evander continued, “then no one will question what becomes of her.”

Rodan gave a slow nod.

“I understand.”

“No,” Evander replied.

“You understand only your part.”

He turned toward the doorway.

“I understand the rest.”

The vision began to disappear.

The stone walls faded into darkness. Evander and Rodan vanished with them, but their voices remained inside my mind.

“The girl must never complete her first shift.”

“No records. No messages. No witnesses.”

“She deserves nothing.”

For years I had believed Ashcrest hated me because I was born without a wolf.

Now I knew the truth.

They had been taught to believe I deserved nothing.

Everything around me gave way.

The Council chamber returned.

Air rushed into my lungs.

Every face was turned toward me.

Caius stood only a step away, his eyes fixed on mine.

Across from me, Elder Evander had gone completely still.

I looked directly at him.

“It was you,” I said.

“You gave the order.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 236

The queen awakens

The queen awakens

(Caius)

The silence inside the chamber felt endless.

Nobody moved after Isla spoke. Every elder, every witness, and every guard stared between her and Evander. Even the scribes had stopped writing.

Evander recovered first.

“Those are serious accusations,” he said. “Visions are not always complete. They can be misunderstood.”

I never looked away from him.

“You looked surprised before you spoke,” I said.

“Why?”

His expression remained calm.

“I was concerned for Luna Isla.”

“You were afraid.”

“I have served this Council for decades.”

“That wasn’t my question.”

Silence settled over the chamber once again.

Pryor stepped forward from the side of the chamber.

“Alpha King.”

I looked at him.

“What is it?”

“There are records that may settle this.”

Evander turned toward him.

“What records?”

Pryor met his eyes.

“The Council archives.”

Evander answered immediately.

“The archives contain nothing about this.”

Pryor remained composed.

The queenLawakens

“You answered before I explained which records meant.”

The other elders turned toward Evander.

I watched him carefully.

Uncertainty crossed his face before it disappeared.

The Chief Elder leaned forward.

“Pryor.”

“What records are you referring to?”

“The inspection requests submitted during Rodan’s rule.”

The chamber became quiet again.

Pryor continued.

“King Caius already proved that several inspections were delayed.”

He looked toward the Council.

“I request permission to compare those delays with the Council correspondence.”

The Chief Elder nodded.

“Granted.”

Evander spoke before Pryor could continue.

“That will accomplish nothing.”

I turned to him.

“You seem eager to stop the search.”

“I am trying to prevent this Council from wasting time.”

“Finding the truth is never a waste of time.”

His jaw tightened.

Pryor remained where he was.

He watched the exchange without interruption. His expression revealed nothing.

Isla stood beside me.

I could still feel our bond.

Her vision had ended, but the anger and pain inside her had not.

I tightened my grip on her hand.

25 Pain

The queenLawakens

Her fury crashed through our bond. Its strength stole my breath. It wasn’t only anger anymore.

It was years of suffering demanding to be answered.

Isla stepped forward.

Her eyes never left Evander. Every muscle in her body had become rigid, and I could feel Vaela pressing harder against the bond.

‘I won’t let him stand there,’ Vaela growled.

‘He doesn’t deserve another breath.’

I stepped in front of Isla.

“Isla.”

She never looked at me.

Each breath came harder than the last. The air around her began to change.

“Look at me.”

“You heard him.”

Her voice shook.

“He did this.”

“He knew.”

“He ordered everything.”

I nodded.

“I know.”

She finally looked at me.

Her eyes filled with tears that never fell. The pain inside her was giving way to something far more dangerous.

‘Move,’ Vaela snarled.

‘Let me have him.’

‘Not like this,’ I answered.

‘He will answer for what he has done.’

‘Now, Vaela replied.

‘He dies now!

The pressure inside our bond became almost too much to bear.

The queen awakens

A silver light appeared beneath Isla’s feet.

Gasps spread through the chamber as the light climbed around her. No one dared move.

“Isla.”

“Stay with me.”

She tried.

-25 Potts

I could feel her fighting for control, but the anger was stronger than anything she had ever carried. Vaela refused to retreat.

Power burst from her.

The torches danced against the stone walls. Every window shook beneath the presence of a Celestial wolf.

Then the change began.

Silver fur spread across her body with the color of moonlight touched by ash. Darker markings surrounded her paws where the chains had once rested. Her silver eyes burned with fury as Vaela answered the challenge herself.

My mate no longer stood before the Council as a woman.

She stood before them in her Celestial wolf form.

Nobody moved.

Every eye remained fixed on her. The chamber had become so quiet that every breath could be heard.

Then Vaela lifted her head.

Her howl shook the chamber.

It rolled through the stone walls with power unlike anything I had ever witnessed. Grief, fury, authority, and command filled every note.

The effect was immediate.

Every wolf in the chamber dropped to one knee.

Some collapsed onto both knees. Others fought the pressure before finally giving in.

The six other elders bowed their heads.

The Chief Elder caught himself against the table before sinking to one knee. Evander struggled against the weight pressing down on him.

He failed.

His knees struck the stone floor.

The guards followed.

The queen awakens

The witnesses did the same.

Within moments, every wolf in the chamber knelt before her.

Only one wolf remained standing

Me.

Vorak stood calm inside me.

‘She is our Queen,’ he said.

“We bow only by choice.”

I never looked away from Islą.

25 Printi

Her silver coat carried the color of moonlight touched by ash. The darker markings around her paws reminded me of the chains she had survived.

She stood above every wolf in the chamber.

Not because she demanded power.

Because power answered to her.

The howl faded.

Silence returned.

No one dared rise.

Every wolf remained where they had fallen.

Then Vaela turned her silver eyes toward Evander.

He looked up from one knee.

The calm he had worn throughout the hearing was gone.

He wasn’t looking at Isla with doubt.

He was looking at her with fear.

Evander lowered his head.

He could no longer deny what stood before him. The Celestial wolf he had spent years trying to erase now stood before him.

Everything he had built was beginning to fall apart.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 237

Justice has begun

(Isla)

I stood over the chamber while silence surrounded me.

Every wolf remained on one knee beneath me. Their heads stayed lowered, and none of them dared meet my eyes for more than a moment. I had never wanted anyone to bow to me, yet none of them could resist what Vaela had become.

Pain settled deep inside me.

The anger was still there, but it no longer burned alone. I could feel every memory of the chains, the hunger, the cold nights, and the voices telling me I was nothing. They all stood beside me as if they had never left.

Vaela stepped closer inside me.

‘He lied to everyone.’

‘He stole everything from us.’

I didn’t answer.

My eyes remained on Evander. He still knelt with his head lowered, but I remembered the man from my vision standing over Rodan without fear. He had ordered my life to be destroyed as though I had never mattered.

The bond wrapped around me.

Caius remained beside me. Even in my wolf form, I could feel him through our bond. He never tried to hold me back.

He was reminding me that I wasn’t alone.

‘He deserves to die, Vaela said.

‘Not here, I answered.

‘Then when?’

I had no answer.

Every part of me wanted justice. Another part wanted him to feel every day I had spent chained inside that shack. Death suddenly felt too easy for what he had done.

The Chief Elder slowly lifted his head.

His eyes settled on me before moving toward Caius. He took a careful breath as though choosing every word.

“Your majesty.”.

The title spread through the chamber.

Several elders repeated it in quiet voices. The guards followed a moment later, and soon every wolf present spoke the same words.

“Your Majesty.”

I froze.

They weren’t speaking to Caius.

They were speaking to me.

I looked toward Caius.

He smiled as he met my eyes. Pride filled our bond, but there was no surprise inside him. It was as though Vorak had already accepted what every other wolf had only just realized.

The Chief Elder lowered his head again.

“The Council recognizes the Celestial Queen.”

His voice carried through the chamber. Every word settled over the wolves gathered before me.

“From this day forward, no law shall stand above her authority.”

A murmur spread through the elders.

None of them challenged the declaration. Whatever doubts they had carried disappeared the moment Vaela revealed herself.

My eyes returned to Evander.

He still hadn’t looked at me again. His hands rested/against the stone floor, and his breathing had become uneven.

I took one step toward him.

Silence held everyone in place.

No one tried to stop me. No one questioned where I was going.

I stopped only a few feet away.

Evander stayed where he was. His head remained lowered, and his hands rested against the stone floor. He still couldn’t bring himself to look at me.

Vaela stood tall.

Her ears pointed forward as she watched him. A low growl left her chest, carrying across the chamber without a single wolf daring to move.

Evander flinched.

The sound reached him, and his shoulders became rigid. He took a slow breath before finally lifting his head.

Our cyes met.

His gaze lasted only a moment. Whatever he saw in my silver eyes was enough to break what little confidence he still had.

He looked away.

No one spoke. No one interrupted what was happening before them.

Vaela took another step.

My claws touched the stone floor. Every movement brought me closer until I stood directly in front of him.

Evander lowered his head again.

He couldn't face me. The man who had ordered my life to be destroyed couldn't even meet my eyes.

Another growl left Vaela.

It wasn't loud. It didn't need to be.

Every wolf in the chamber heard it.

The sound carried years of pain. It carried every night spent chained inside that shack and every lie that had stolen my place in the world.

Tears filled Evander's eyes.

His lips parted, but no words came. The powerful elder who had controlled everyone around him was gone. An exhausted old man knelt in his place.

The Chief Elder rose to his feet.

The other elders remained where they were. None of them questioned what they had witnessed.

“The truth has been revealed,” the Chief Elder said.

His voice carried through the chamber. Every wolf listened without taking their eyes off me.

“Evander.”

The old elder looked up.

“You will answer for your crimes before this Council.”

Two guards stepped forward.

Neither one hesitated. They stopped beside Evander and waited for the Chief Elder’s next order.

“Take him into custody.”

Evander closed his eyes.

He offered no resistance. Every secret he had protected had been dragged into the light.

Nobody objected.

Justice has begun

The guards helped Evander to his feet. His head remained lowered as they led him away from the center of the chamber. Not a single elder spoke in his defense.

Caius stepped forward.

His eyes swept across the chamber before settling on the Council. His voice carried the authority every wolf present recognized.

“The hearing is over.”

No one questioned him.

“The Council will reconvene once Evander has been secured. Until then, everyone except the Chief Elder and Pryor will leave this chamber.”

The elders rose one by one.

The guards escorted the witnesses toward the doors. Within moments, the crowded chamber began to empty until only a handful of wolves remained.

Caius turned toward Pryor.

“Pryor.”

“Yes, Alpha King.”

“Bring clothing for Isla.”

Pryor gave a respectful nod.

“Immediately.”

Caius looked at me again.

“If she returns to her human form, I don’t want her left exposed.”

“I understand.”

Without another word, Pryor left the chamber.

Silence settled over us once more.

I remained where I was.

Vaela stood quietly inside me. The anger that had carried us this far had begun to ease, replaced by a deep exhaustion that reached every part of me.

Caius stopped a short distance away.

He didn’t try to touch me.

He simply waited.

‘I am here,’ he said through our bond.

Vaela lowered her head.

The fight inside her had finally begun to fade. The need for revenge no longer drowned out everything else.

Hlooked at Caius.

He met my eyes without fear. There was only patience, understanding, and the quiet promise that I would never face another battle alone.

The fear and doubt I had carried for so many years no longer held me.

I wasn’t the frightened girl chained inside a forgotten shack anymore.

I was Isla Blackthorn.

And no one would ever take that from me again.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 238

The queen aerfaen

The queen as risen

(Isla)

I remained where I was.

The chamber had nearly emptied, but Toquldn’t bring myself to move. Vaela stood quietly inside me, watching every doorway and every face that remained. The rage that had carried us through the hearing had settled into a deep exhaustion.

The bond reached for me.

‘You are safe,’ Caius said.

I closed my eyes.

Safe.

The word no longer felt impossible. I was still learning how to believe it.

Vaela lowered her head.

‘He cannot touch us anymore.’

‘No.’

‘Neither can the others.’

I opened my eyes again.

The Chief Elder remained near the council table. He looked toward Caius before turning his attention back to me. Respect filled his face in a way I had never expected to receive.

“You have endured more than any wolf should.”

I held his gaze.

I couldn’t answer him. Too many thoughts filled my mind, and none of them would become words. Everything I had seen inside the vision still felt painfully real.

The Chief Elder lowered his head.

“The Council failed you.”

Silence followed.

No one denied his words. No one searched for excuses. The truth had become too large for anyone to hide.

Caius stepped closer.

He stopped several feet away, giving me the space I still needed. Even without touching me, I felt his presence through our bond. I already knew he was there.

The queenLas risen am proud of you,’ he said.

Emotion filled our bond.

Not because I had become the Celestial Queen. Not because the Council had bowed before me. He was proud because I had survived everything meant to destroy me.

My ears lifted.

I looked at him.

His eyes never left mine.

There was no fear inside them. No pity. Only the same quiet certainty he had carried from the day he opened the shack door and found me.

A door opened behind him.

Pryor returned carrying folded clothing in his hands. He stopped several steps away before lowering his head respectfully.

“Alpha King.”

Caius looked toward him.

“Thank you.”

Pryor placed the clothing on a nearby chair. He never came closer. He understood why Caius wanted to leave the choice to me instead of making it for me.

“I will wait outside,” Pryor said.

Caius nodded.

“You have done enough for today.”

Pryor bowed once before leaving the chamber again. The doors closed quietly behind him. Once again, only Caius, the Chief Elder, and I remained.

Vaela looked toward the clothing.

‘Do you wish to change back?”

I thought about it.

Part of me wanted to remain exactly as I was. This body had protected me when I needed it most. It had stood before the wolves who had spent years believing I deserved nothing.

‘I don’t know.’

‘There is no hurry!’

Caius took one careful step closer.

“If you’re ready,” he said quietly, “you can come to me.”

He waited.

He never reached for me. He never expected me to obey. The choice remained mine, just as it always had.

Vaela looked at me

‘We choose.’

I took a step.

Then another.

My body answered me without hesitation. I crossed the distance between us until I stood in front of Caius. My silver eyes met his, and he smiled.

He remained exactly where he was.

He didn’t reach for me. He didn’t ask anything of me. He simply waited, giving me the same choice he had given me from the day we met.

I lowered my head.

Vaela stepped forward with me. I rested my forehead against Caius’s, and he closed his eyes. Warmth passed through our bond, quiet and familiar, asking for nothing except that I knew he was there.

I looked toward the council table.

Only a short time ago, every eye had been watching Evander. Now the lies that had protected him were gone.

Vaela stood proudly inside me.

‘We will never bow again.’

‘Never.’

Vaela lifted her head.

‘They bowed because they had no choice.

‘No.’

I looked across the emptying chamber.

‘They bowed because the truth finally stood before them.”

No lie remained strong enough to hide it anymore.

I looked around the chamber.

The place no longer felt like a court sitting in judgment over me. It had become a place where lies had finally fallen apart.

Vaela watched the remaining elders.

‘They will remember this day!

‘So will I

Not because they had knelt before me.

Because they had finally been forced to face the truth.

The remaining elders slowly rose to their feet.

None of them looked at me with fear anymore. Respect had replaced every doubt they had carried into this chamber.

The Chief Elder bowed once.

“Your Majesty.”

The others followed him.

No one had ordered them to.

They chose to.

Vaela watched them quietly.

‘This is how it should have been.’

I looked toward Caius.

He smiled.

The bond between us settled into quiet peace.

Vaela rested beside me without another word. The battle that had shaped my life was over.

A new path waited ahead.

This time, no one would choose it for me.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 239

A moment of peace

(Caius)

Isla’s gifts were remarkable. They had uncovered truths no witness could ever reveal.

Each vision pulled away another layer of deception, revealing a conspiracy far larger than any of us had imagined.

The truth had finally reached the surface. The lies Rodan and Evander had protected for years could no longer survive the light.

The hearing had ended.

Justice had not.

Evander would answer for every order he had given and every lie he had protected. The Council would see to that.

I had no intention of allowing anything to be overlooked.

Every record would be examined.

Every decision made during Evander's years on the Council would be questioned.

If the truth had been hidden once, it would never be hidden again.

Some victories ended battles. This one demanded responsibility, and every decision made after today would shape the future.

Today's judgment would be remembered, but the choices that followed would define the legacy of this Council.

My thoughts shifted beyond the hearing.

Today's judgment closed one chapter, but the work waiting ahead would demand far more than a single decision. The Council would need to restore confidence in every law it enforced and every promise it made beneath the Crown.

Trust was not restored through words.

It was restored through action.

Every choice made after today would prove whether the Council had truly learned from its own mistakes.

I intended to make certain it had.

I looked toward isla again. Enough time had passed that I found myself wondering whether she was ready to return to her human form.

I remained where I was.

There was no reason to rush her. Whatever she decided, I would accept it without question.

“Are you ready now?”

asked the question quietly.

She didn’t answer immediately. I waited without speaking, knowing this decision belonged to her and no one else.

A quiet feeling passed through our bond I smiled and waited for the shift to begin.

Vaela stepped back with quiet acceptance, allowing Isla to take control as the shift slowly began.

I stepped toward the chair and gathered the clothing. When I returned to her, ! held them out without saying a word.

Isla accepted the clothing from my hands.

“Thank you,” she said.

I smiled.

“You’re welcome.”

She unfolded the shirt before pulling it over her head. A moment later, she stepped into the trousers and fastened them before brushing her hair back from her face.

I waited until she finished.

“Better?”

She looked down at herself before smiling.

“Much.”

I held out my hand.

She placed hers in mine without hesitation.

I smiled.

“We should head back to our quarters.”

She looked at me.

“You need to rest after today.”

A small smile touched her lips.

“And what about you?”

I closed my fingers around hers.

“I’ll rest once I know you are.”

She laughed quietly.

“I think that’s the first order you’ve given me all day.”

A moment of pease

Ismiled.

“And will you obey it?”

She pretended to think about it.

“I suppose I can.”

I chuckled before leading her from the chamber.

The corridor outside had grown quiet.

Most of the guards had returned to their posts while servants moved quietly through the halls, making way the moment they saw us.

No one tried to stop us.

No one asked about the hearing.

The news would spread soon enough.

For now, they gave us the privacy we needed.

I looked at Isla.

“Are you alright?”

She nodded.

“I will be.”

I believed her.

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Together, we continued through the long corridor until our quarters came into view. I opened the door, letting her step inside before following behind her.

The moment the door closed, the silence around us became a welcome one.

I released her hand once we were inside.

The fire still burned in the hearth exactly as we had left it earlier that morning. Our quarters felt exactly as we had left them, untouched by everything that had happened beyond those walls.

I looked at Isla.

“Would you like something to eat?”

She considered the question before answering.

“Yes.”

The answer came without hesitation.

‘Dena.’

‘Yes, Alpha King?’

(A momentof peace

Please send a servant with tea and whatever the kitchen has prepared for the evening!

I’ll see to it immediately.’

I smiled at Isla.

“Come here.”

She walked over without hesitation.

Together, we sat on the edge of the bed, enjoying the quiet while we waited.

“You were amazing today. I couldn’t have asked for a stronger Queen to stand beside me.”

She leaned against my shoulder. “I couldn’t have done any of it without you.” ! wrapped an arm around her gently.

I kissed the top of her head. For a little while, neither of us spoke. We were simply content to sit together. We simply enjoyed the peace we had earned together.

A gentle knock broke the silence. I smiled at Isla before standing. “That will be our dinner.”

I crossed the room and opened the door. A servant bowed respectfully before handing me the tray. “Thank you,” I said, accepting it.

I placed the tray on the table and uncovered the dishes. The meal was simple, but after everything the day had demanded, it was exactly what we needed.

I glanced toward Isla. “Come and eat.” She walked over with a smile before sitting beside me at the table.

Isla thanked me quietly before picking up her cup. I waited until she took the first sip before beginning my own meal.

Isla reached for another piece of bread before smiling at me. “I didn’t realize how hungry I was until now.”

I smiled. “I suspected you were.” I placed another piece of bread onto her plate before continuing with my own meal.

We took our time with the meal, saying little. After everything the day had demanded, there was nowhere else either of us wanted to be.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 240

The promise I intend to keep

(Caius)

The meal came to an end without either of us noticing how much time had passed. The empty plates remained on the table while we stayed where we were. After everything the last few days had demanded, neither of us seemed eager to move. It felt like the first real moment that truly belonged to us.

I looked at Isla.

The strain that had followed her since the journal first opened had finally begun to ease. She still looked tired, but the fear that had once filled her eyes was gone. Seeing that alone settled something inside me.

A quiet knock sounded at the door.

“Come in,” I said.

A different servant stepped inside and bowed respectfully before gathering the empty dishes from the table. He worked quickly without disturbing us. After collecting the last plate, he inclined his head once more before leaving. The door closed behind him, and we were alone again.

For a while, neither of us spoke.

I watched Isla across the table. She noticed and raised an eyebrow.

“Again?”

“I told you I wasn’t planning to stop.”

She rested her chin against her hand.

“You really are determined.”

“About one thing in particular.”

She studied me for a moment.

“You’ve had that look since breakfast.”

“What look?”

“The one that says you’ve already planned something.”

I smiled.

“You’re not wrong.”

“I didn’t think I was.”

She folded her hands on the table.

“Should I be worried?”

“Not unless you object to spending several days alone with me.”

don’t think that’s something I’d object to.”.

“Good.”

One corner of her mouth lifted.

“So that is your plan?”

“It is.”

She waited.

“When the Council finally leaves Wraithbone, I intend to disappear with my mate for several days.”

“Disappear?”

“No meetings. No reports. No interruptions.”

“And what exactly do you plan to do with all that time?”

I met her eyes.

“Make love to you constantly.”

She considered my answer without looking away.

“You’ve thought about this.”

“I’ve had time to.”

“I can tell.”

“I hope that’s not a problem.”

“It sounds like you’ve already decided.”

“I have.”

She gave a small nod.

“Then I suppose the Council should leave as quickly as possible.”

“That’s the best idea I’ve heard all day.”

She took a moment before rising from her chair.

“I’ll remember you said that.”

“I was hoping you would.”

She walked around the table until she stopped beside me.

“And if someone interrupts your plans?”

I slipped my hand around hers.

“Then they’ll regret their timing.”

“The Council might have other ideas.”

“They’re welcome to have them.”

“And you’re still convinced you’ll win?”

“I’ve spent enough time sharing you with duties, meetings, and ancient journals.”

I drew her a little closer.

“When this is finally behind us, my mate comes first.”

She searched my face for a moment.

“I think I can live with that.”

“I was hoping you would.”

She rested one hand against my chest.

“You’ve thought about this more than you’re admitting.”

“I’ve had plenty of time.”

“And every one of those thoughts reached the same conclusion?”

“They did.”

She looked at me for another moment.

“I almost feel sorry for anyone who tries to change your mind.”

“They’d be wasting their time.”

“That certain?”

“I’ve waited long enough.”

She nodded once.

“So have I.”

I rested my forehead against hers.

“Then we’ll make the most of every moment when this is finally behind us.”

“You won’t hear any complaints from me.”

I brushed my thumb across the back of her hand.

“You’ve become very good at agreeing with me.”

She looked at me knowingly.

“Only when you’re worth agreeing with”

“And today?”

“Today, I think you’ve earned it.

“I’ll remember that.”

“I expected you would.”

I looked at her for another moment.

“After everything that’s happened, I want the next memories we make to be happier ones.”

“I’d like that too.”

I slipped my arms around her.

“Then we’ll start with one day.”

“And after that?”

“As many as you’ll give me.”

She rested her head against my chest.

“I think I can manage that.

Holding Isla like this reminded me how close we’d come to losing a future we hadn’t even begun to live. Nothing beyond these walls mattered more than the woman in my arms.

I didn’t need another victory today. Having Isla safely beside me already felt like more than enough.

There would always be responsibilities waiting for me, but none of them would ever matter more than my mate.

The journal had shown Isla a future written in blood. I intended to make certain it remained nothing more than a warning. I refused to lose the years that still waited for sla and me.

Whatever still waited beyond tomorrow, I would meet it prepared. The Council, the journai, and every secret buried for centuries would face the same answer. I wasn’t searching for danger. I was searching for the truth.

The path ahead would not be easy. Secrets still waited to be uncovered, and enemies had yet to reveal themselves. None of that changed my resolve.

The elder in that vision had told me to stop searching.

He would be disappointed.

I intended to uncover every secret hidden inside that journal, expose every lie, and make certain the future Isla had seen never came to pass. I had promised my mate a lifetime together, and I intended to keep that promise.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 241

She didn’t hesitate

(Caius)

We stayed where we were for another minute. Neither of us wanted the afternoon to end. I wished it could last a little longer.

A knock came at the door. I looked toward it before looking back at isla. She smiled when she saw my face. I already knew I wasn’t going to like the interruption.

“I suppose that’s our peace ending.”

I smiled before standing. My eyes stayed on her as I crossed the room. I reached for the handle. Then I opened the door.

Pryor stood outside with a respectful nod. His expression told me this wasn't a social visit. I stepped into the hallway before pulling the door closed. I already knew Isla would hear every word anyway.

"The Chief Elder asked me to deliver a message."

I looked at Pryor and waited for him to continue. The Council still had work to finish. Neither of us. expected otherwise. I remained where I was.

"What message?"

"The Council will reconvene tomorrow morning."

I nodded once. That wasn't unexpected after everything that had happened. There were still too many questions left unanswered. The investigation wasn't over.

"The Chief Elder also asked that you and Luna Isla attend."

I studied him for a moment. His voice remained calm from beginning to end. Whatever waited tomorrow could wait until morning. That was enough for me.

"We'll be there."

Pryor inclined his head. He turned and walked down the hallway without another word. I watched him leave before opening the door again. Isla already knew what had been said before I stepped back inside.

I stepped back inside and closed the door, Isla had untied her hair while I was gone. She set the ribbon on the vanity before looking at me. I walked over to her.

"Tomorrow morning."

She nodded once. Then she picked up the brush and held it out to me. I took it from her hand without a word.

I moved behind her. She sat down while I brushed her hair. Neither of us hurried.

"I was hoping for one more day."

She looked at me in the mirror. I met her eyes as I drew the brush through her hair again. Then she gave a small nod.

"So was I."

I set the brush back where she'd left it. She remained seated as our eyes met again through the mirror.

'Enjoy this while it lasts, Vorak said.

'I plan to,' I answered. I kept my eyes on Isla.

She looked at me in the mirror for a moment longer.

"You know what I keep thinking about?" she said.

"Tell me."

"That in two days none of this will matter anymore," she said. "The Council. The hearing. Evander." She paused. "None of it."

"No," I said. "None of it."

She nodded once and looked away from the mirror.

"I also wanted to plan a visit to see my sister once everything is settled. We hardly communicate with each other and my father lives too far to visit without intention."

"You should," she said simply.

"I know," I said.

"Life keeps getting in the way."

"It does," I said. "But it won't always."

She nodded once.

"We'll go together," she said. "When this is done."

I looked at her.

"My sister will like you," I said.

"You sound certain."

"I am," I said. "She has very little patience for people who aren't genuine,"

Isla smiled at that.

"Then I should be fine."

“She’ll probably argue with you,” I said.

Isla looked at me in the mirror.

“About what?”

“Anything she disagrees with,” I said. “She doesn’t hold back because of rank or title. She never has.”

To

Isla smiled.

“I already like her more,” she said.

I almost smiled at that.

After a while she looked at me in the mirror.

“Can I ask you something?”

“Yes,” I said.

“When you found me in the shack,” she said. “Before you knew what I was. Before the bond. What did you think when you saw me?”

I looked at her reflection.

“I thought someone had done something unforgivable,” I said. “And that I was going to find out who.”

She was quiet for a moment.

“That was it?” she said. “Nothing else?”

“I thought you were going to fight me,” I said. “Even in the state you were in. There was something in the way you held yourself that told me you hadn’t finished.”

She looked at her hands.

“I hadn’t,” she said.

“I know,” I said. “That was the first thing I understood about you.”

She looked back at the mirror.

“What was the second?” she asked.

I thought about it.

“That whatever had been done to you hadn’t touched the part of you that mattered most,” I said. “It had tried. It hadn’t managed.”

She was quiet for a long moment.

“I didn’t feel that way at the time,” she said.

“I know,” I said. “But I could see it. Sometimes other people can see what you can’t see in yourself yet.”

She looked at me in the mirror with an expression I recognized even if I couldn’t name it exactly.

“Is that why you didn’t turn back?” she asked.

“I was never going to turn back,” I said.

“Even before the bond?”

“Even before the bond,” I said.

She held my gaze for a moment and then looked away.

“I used to think about what would have happened if someone else had found me first,” she said.

“I know,” I said. “You told me”

“I don’t think about it anymore,” she said.

I looked at her.

“When did that stop?” I asked.

She thought about it.

“Somewhere between the mating and the hearing,” she said. “I’m not sure exactly. It just stopped arriving.”

She remained seated and our eyes met in the mirror and the bond between us was warm and complete and asking nothing.

She turned to face me.

“Let’s lie down for a bit,” I said.

She didn’t hesitate.

We moved to the bed together and she settled against me and I put my arm around her and neither of us said anything else.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 242

It’s done

(Caius)

I woke before dawn the next morning. For a few moments, I remained where I was, listening to Isla’s quiet breathing beside me. The Council could wait another minute. This was how I wanted every morning to begin.

I turned my head and looked at her. The first light of morning came through the curtains and rested across her face. I couldn’t imagine waking any other way. I doubted I ever would.

She stirred a moment later before opening her eyes. The instant she saw me, a small smile appeared. It wasn’t forced or uncertain anymore. It came as naturally as breathing.

“Good morning,” she said.

“Good morning.”

She studied me for a moment before speaking again.

“You’ve been awake for a while.”

“I wanted a few more minutes with you before the day began.”

Her expression softened.

“I’m glad you waited.”

“There wasn’t anywhere else I’d rather be.

I reached over and brushed a loose strand of hair away from her face.

“We should get ready.”

She nodded.

“The sooner this ends, the sooner we can leave it behind.”

“I intend to.”

She smiled.

“I believe you.”

I climbed out of bed and held out my hand to her.

“Come on.”

She slipped her hand into mine without hesitation.

The morning routine unfolded the way it always did between us now.

We dressed without speaking much. We knew each other’s routines well enough that neither of us ever stood in the other’s way. By the time we left our quarters, the pack house had already begun its day.

Isla straightened her collar and looked at me.

“Ready,” she said.

Not a question.

I nodded once and opened the door.

The pack house was already moving when we stepped into the corridor.

Isla walked beside me, and I matched her pace without thinking about it. Somewhere along the way, walking side by side had simply become natural. Neither of us questioned it anymore.

Pryor was waiting outside with the final documents tucked beneath one arm. He inclined his head as we approached.

“Alpha King. Luna Isla.”

“Pryor,” Isla replied.

He fell into step beside us as we made our way toward the council chamber.

The doors already stood open when we arrived.

The Council was waiting. Sorin sat at the head of the table, while the remaining elders occupied their usual places. One chair remained empty. No one looked toward it.

Neither did Isla.

She walked through those doors with quiet confidence and took her seat without hesitation. I couldn't help remembering the first time she'd entered this chamber. Back then she had been uncertain of what awaited her. Today there was no uncertainty left. She knew exactly who she was, and everyone in the room knew it too.

Sorin inclined his head toward her before looking around the table.

"We will begin."

The chamber settled.

My attention returned to Isla. Her hands rested calmly on the table, and her eyes remained forward. Nothing about her demanded attention, yet everyone in the room felt her présence. Confidence suited her far better than fear ever had.

Sorin opened the record.

He read the formal findings from the beginning. Every charge. Every piece of evidence. Every confirmed connection between Evander and the orders carried out against Isla for years. His voice remained measured, and no one interrupted while the truth was entered into the record.

I barely looked at Sorin.

Instead, I watched Isla.

She listened without her expression changing once. Her hands never moved. She never reached for me through the bond. She allowed every word to be spoken and never looked away from it.

When Sorin finished, she remained exactly where she was.

A moment later, her eyes met mine.

I held her gaze until she looked back toward the Chief Elder.

Sorin rose from his chair.

“Walk with me, Luna Isla.”

She looked at me briefly before standing.

“I’ll be right outside,” I said.

She nodded and followed him.

I remained where I was, giving them the privacy they deserved. Whatever Sorin wished to say belonged to Isla until she decided otherwise. I trusted her enough not to wonder what passed between them.

Several minutes later, the chamber doors opened again.

Isla stepped back inside first. Sorin followed a moment later before giving us both a respectful nod.

“The Council’s business at Wraithbone has concluded.”

He turned and left the chamber.

The other elders followed without another

Word.

The Council had arrived at Wraithbone to decide whether Isla truly was what the ancient laws described.

They were leaving with no doubt at all.

I looked at Isla.

She was already looking at me.

“Ready to leave this room behind?” she asked.

“Yes.”

“Good,” she said.

“So am I.”

She stepped beside me, and I matched her pace. This time, we left the chamber with nothing left to prove to anyone.

Outside the chamber Pryor was waiting.

He looked at us both and read whatever he needed to read from our faces before he spoke.

“It’s done then,” he said.

It’s done

It’s done, I said.

He nodded once and tucked the documents under his arm.

“I’ll begin the format filing immediately.”

He turned and left and Isla watched him go.

“He never wastes a moment,” she said.

“No,” I said. “He doesn’t.”

I looked at Isla.

“The Council is done,” I said..

“Yes,” she said.

“Which means I have a promise to keep.”

She looked at me for a moment.

“I was wondering when you’d bring that up,” she said.

“Now you know,” I said.

She took my hand.

“Then let’s go,” she said.

I held her hand and we walked.

Nothing else needed our attention right now. Nothing else was going to get it.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 243

The promise kept

(Caius)

We barely made it back to our quarters before I shut the door behind us. Isla turned to me at once, and whatever patience we'd both carried through the Council was gone. My hands went to her clothes and hers went to mine, neither of us pretending we wanted grace more than speed. Fabric hit the floor piece by piece while she kissed me like she'd been holding that back all morning.

I backed her against the door and she laughed once under her breath before pulling me right back to her. Her fingers worked at my shirt, then lower, urgent now, certain. I dragged her top over her head and looke at her for one second before kissing her again, harder this time. She reached for my belt and said my name like a command.

I lifted her and she wrapped herself around me without hesitation!

"Bedroom," she said, though neither of us moved.

"In a minute," I answered, and she smiled against my mouth like she knew that was a lie.

I carried her anyway.

She kept kissing me the whole way, one hand in my hair, the other working the rest of my shirt open while crossed the room. By the time I got her to the bed, neither of us had much left on. I set her down for all o half a second before she caught my wrist and pulled me back between her knees.

"Caius."

That tone alone was enough to finish whatever patience I had left.

I got her under me and kissed her until she stopped trying to speak at all. Her hands moved over my ches my back, lower, learning nothing new and wanting all of it anyway. When I finally pushed inside her, she gasped against my mouth and held on to me hard. I gave her what she'd wanted since we left the chamber, deep and rough enough to make the bed shift beneath us. She met every thrust like she'd been waiting all day to be taken apart by it.

When she came, it hit her fast. I felt it in the way her body tightened around me, in the broken sound she made with my name. I followed not long after, buried deep while she held me there like she had no intention of letting me go.

I stayed over her, breathing hard, still buried inside her while the last of her shudders moved through both of us. Isla's hands slid up my back and held me there as if she had no

intention of letting me go yet. Fine by me. I kissed her once, then again, slower this time, and felt her smile against my mouth.

“You’re not done,” she said softly.

“No,” I said. “Not even close.”

That earned me the look I wanted. Warm, wanting, a little dangerous. I drew back just enough to see her properly, then shifted my hand down between us and touched her until her breath caught all over again. She opened for me at once, still sensitive, still wanting, and when I started moving again she arched beneath me with a broken sound that went straight through me.

Our kind recovered fast. Faster wherrit was each other.

trolled us and took her with me, settling her over me so she could find her own rhythm this time. Her hair fell around us as she moved, one hand braced on my chest, the other tangled with mine. I watched her ride me, patient for all of three seconds before my hands went to her hips and helped. She laughed once at that, breathless, then lost the laugh entirely when I drove up harder.

“Caius…”

“Again,” I said.

She came with my name on her mouth, and I followed a few thrusts later, holding her down against me while we both shook through it. Even then neither of us moved to stop. She kissed me lazy and deep, and I already knew this bed was not getting a moment’s peace before nightfall.

I kept her with me for a moment after, one hand at her back, the other on her hip, feeling the way her breathing slowly started to settle even while her body still answered mine. Isla rested her forehead against mine and smiled, the satisfied sort that always made me want to ruin her all over again. I kissed her once, more careful this time, then let my mouth drift to her throat. She shivered and laughed under her breath.

“Careful,” she murmured.

“That would be wise,” I said, though neither of us sounded interested in wisdom.

Vorak had started pushing forward again, stirred by her scent, by the taste of her, by the simple fact that she was still draped over me and not nearly as finished as she pretended to be. He wanted control. Wanted another round. Wanted to pin her down and take what she was already offering. I held him back with effort and ran my hands up her sides instead, slow enough to keep us both on the right side of losing sense.

“Vorak is close,” she said quietly.

“He is,” I said. “But he does not get you yet. Not this time.”

Her eyes darkened at that, warm and knowing. She kissed me again, lazy at first, then deep enough to test my restraint on purpose. I broke the kiss before it could become something else and brushed her hair back from her face.

“We should stop while stopping is still possible.

She looked almost offended. “That sounds unlike you.”

“It is,” I said. “You should appreciate the rarity.”

She laughed. I rolled us carefully and pulled her against my side, covering us both with the sheet. She tucked herself in close, one leg over mine, one hand spread on my chest.

“Next time,” she said.

I kissed the top of her head. “Soon.”

For a little while, the rest of the world disappeared, leaving only my mate in my arms exactly where she belonged.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 244

I do now

(Caius)

I felt Isla shift against me, and I knew before she spoke.

Vaela.

Of course. Impatient thing.

“Hello, Caius.”

Her hands found my shoulders first, then slid down my arms with slow certainty, as though reacquainting herself with something she already knew well enough. There was nothing shy in the touch. Nothing tentative. Isla had softness even when she wanted. Vaela never did. She approached like instinct given shape.

I let my hands rest at her waist and looked up at her properly.

“Hello, Vaela.”

“I want you and then Vorak next.” She replied.

Her honesty didn’t shock me. It never could. Vaela was many things, but subtle was only one of them when she was amused enough to bother.

I searched her face and found no cruelty there, no provocation for its own sake. Just desire spoken plainly.

“For you,” I said quietly, “or for Isla too?”

Vaela’s expression changed at that, becoming softer in a way most people would never notice.

“For us,” she said.

That answer mattered more than she knew.

I let my thumb trace once along her waist and held her gaze. “Then come here.”

Vaela didn’t hesitate. She moved closer until there was no space left between us, all heat and quiet certainty. Beneath her, I could still feel Isla, warm and watchful, not absent, only listening. That made something in me settle.

“You never ask for little things,” I said.

Vaela’s mouth curved. “Little things bore me.”

I laughed. “And Vorak knows this?”

“He will.”

I looked at her for a moment. “You say that like a threat.”

Vaela’s fingers tightened at my shoulders just enough for me to notice. “No. A certainty.”

I do now

Vaela looked at me with quiet amusement.

You love making Isla happy.”

“I do.”

“I’ve noticed.”

“I wasn’t trying to hide it.”

Satisfaction moved through Vaela’s eyes. “Good. Then stop talking.”

I smiled despite myself. “Commanding.”

“You like that.”

“I like clarity.”

“Then here is some.” Her hand slid to the back of my neck, firm and unhesitating. “Less talk and more action, Caius.”

Beneath her, Isla stirred with a flush of warmth that bled through the bond, embarrassed and wanting all at once. Vaela felt it and smiled, softer now.

I drew her in until her forehead brushed mine. “You ask like a challenge.”

Vaela’s breath touched my mouth. “No. I ask expecting to be answered.”

I answered by pulling her down into my lap and kissing her properly at last.

Vaela met me with immediate certainty, no hesitation, no softness offered for the sake of being easy. She kissed like claim and hunger and quiet satisfaction, as if she had already known I would stop thinking and start listening. Beneath her, Isla flared warm through the bond, shy and aching and fully present, and the combination of them nearly undid me.

My hands moved along Vaela’s back. I felt the way she settled when touch replaced talk. Not calmer. Never that. Just more honest.

“Better,” she said against my mouth.

“Insufferable.”

“And still right.”

I was about to laugh, but she kissed me again before I could.

I let the bond guide more than thought. Isla’s tenderness was there, wrapped through Vaela’s deeper wanting, making neither of them smaller. Vaela didn’t take from Isla. She carried her with her. I understood that now more clearly than before, and the understanding changed something in me.

My forehead rested briefly against hers.

“For both of you,” I said again.

Vaela’s expression shifted, some private satisfaction giving way to something rarer. Trust, perhaps. Or the

(Positive De

He reached over and brushed a loose strand of hair behind my ear.

“But until then?”

“Until then,” I said, “I’m staying exactly where I am.”

“I had a feeling you might.”

I smiled.

“And you?”

“I’m comfortable.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

He laughed quietly.

“I’ll be completely fine in another hour.”

“So you admit you’re not there yet.”

“I admit nothing.”

“Liar.”

“A little.”

“I knew it.”

He closed his eyes for a moment before opening them again.

“Vorak is extremely pleased with himself.”

“So is Vaela.”

That earned another smile from both of us.

I reached through the bond.

Vaela answered immediately.

‘Happy?‘

She sounded entirely too pleased with herself.

‘Very!

‘I told you he understood.’

‘You did.‘

‘I was right.

‘You usually think you are.‘

She laughed without the slightest shame.

“Because I usually am.

I couldn’t argue with that.

Caius watched me with quiet amusement.

“She’s talking again.”

“She is.”

“Should I be concerned?”

“Only if she decides she isn’t finished.”

He looked toward the ceiling.

“I finally understand why Vorak gives her whatever she asks.”

I laughed.

“Smart wolf.”

“He has learned through experience.”

The bond settled comfortably around all four of us.

Vorak remained content, and Vaela rested beside him without asking for anything more. They didn't need words anymore. Their satisfaction flowed easily through the bond until it reached both Caius and me.

I slipped my hand into his.

"We should probably rest."

"I think that's the first sensible thing either of us has said today."

"I've said several sensible things."

"So have I."

"We'll let history decide."

He smiled and laced his fingers through mine.

"Agreed."

I settled against his side, already feeling our wolves quietly repairing the tiredness that stayed between uş For now, I was happy to enjoy the excuse to stay exactly where I was.

Outside the light had changed.

I hadn't noticed when it happened. Somewhere between Vaela and the quiet that followed, the afternoon had moved on without us.

"We missed dinner," I said.

Positive coe

Gaius didn't open his eyes.

"Dena will manage."

"She'll know why."

"The whole pack will know why.

I considered that for a moment.

"Does that bother you?" I asked.

"No," he said. "Does it bother you?"

I thought about it honestly.

“No,” I said. “Not even a little.”

Vaela stirred inside me.

‘Good,‘ she said.

‘You’re eavesdropping,‘ I said.

‘I live here,’ she said. ‘I don’t eavesdrop. I simply exist.

I almost laughed out loud at that.

Caius opened one eye.

“Vaela?”

“She has opinions about the pack knowing,” I said.

“What kind of opinions?”

“Positive ones.”

He closed his eye again.

“Of course they are,” he said.

I closed my eyes.

For a while neither of us spoke and the bond was warm and Vaela was quiet for once and Vorak was somewhere underneath Caius doing whatever satisfied wolves did when they had everything they wanted.

“Caius,” I said.

“Yes.”

“I think today was a good day.”

A pause.

“Yes,” he said. “It was.”

Gaius turned his head toward me after a while.

“What are you thinking about?” he asked.

“The journal,” I said. “The warning.”

He was quiet for a moment.

“The child must never be returned,” he said.

“Yes,” I said. “I keep coming back to it.” I looked at the ceiling. “What if I’m not actually their daughter? What if I was placed with them and someone knew and tried to make sure I was never sent back?”

Caius said nothing immediately.

“That changes everything,” I said.

“Yes,” he said. “It does.”

“I want to find out,” I said. “I need to know who I actually am.”

Caius didn’t hesitate.

“Then we find out,” he said. “First thing in the morning. The library. Whatever the journals haven’t shown us yet.”

I looked at him.

“You’re sure?”

“You’ve waited long enough for answers,” he said. “I’m not asking you to wait any longer.”

I held his gaze for a moment then looked back at the ceiling.

That settled something in me that had been unsettled for a long time.

I stayed where I was and let my mind go where it wanted.

If I wasn’t Derek and Helene’s daughter then I had never known who I was. Not really. Everything I had believed about where I came from, every piece of identity I had built even in the absence of love, rested on an assumption that might not be true.

That was a large thing to sit with.

I sat with it anyway.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 245

Positive ones

Positive ones

(Isla)

I came back to myself with a quiet groan.

My body protested the moment I tried to move, though I already knew it wouldn't last long. Our wolves healed quickly. Even so, I decided there was no reason to move any sooner than necessary

I looked around our quarters.

The blanket hung halfway off the bed. A pillow rested near the footboard, and one of Caius's boots had somehow found its way beside the fireplace. Considering the way the afternoon had begun, thought we'd shown remarkable restraint.

A smile found its way onto my face.

"At least the room isn't destroyed this time."

A quiet laugh answered me.

I turned my head toward Caius.

He lay beside me with one arm beneath his head, looking far more relaxed than he usually allowed himself to appear. His hair was thoroughly untidy, and although the bond told me he was already recovering, there was no hiding that he'd spent every bit as much energy as I had.

"You sound disappointed," he said.

"I didn't say that."

"You were thinking it."

"I was making an observation."

His smile grew.

“I’ll accept that.”

“I suppose we’re becoming more responsible.”

“I wouldn’t make that claim yet.”

I laughed before giving another small groan.

“There it is.”

“What?”

CICA

Positive ones

“I forgot for a second.”

“Our wolves will fix that soon enough.”

“I know.”

He reached over and brushed a loose strand of hair behind my ear.

“But until then?”

“Until then,” I said, “I’m staying exactly where I am.”

“I had a feeling you might.”

I smiled.

“And you?”

“I’m comfortable.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

He laughed quietly.

“I’ll be completely fine in another hour.”

“So you admit you’re not there yet.”

admit nothing.”

“Liar.”

“A little.”

“I knew it.”

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“Vorak is extremely pleased with himself.”

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‘Happy?’

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Positive ones

‘Very.’

‘I told you he understood.’

‘You did.’

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Positive ones

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I looked at him.

Positive ones

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The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 246

A name removed

A name removed

(Isla)

The library felt different the next morning. Nothing had changed inside it, yet I entered with a question that had followed me through the entire night. Caius remained beside me as we crossed. toward the table where the oldest journals had been arranged. Pryor had already opened the curtains for us.

I looked across the books before sitting down. Some had cracked covers, while others were wrapped in cloth to protect pages that had survived for centuries. The journal that had opened for me before rested apart from the others. Caius had placed it there himself before anyone else entered.

“Are you ready?” he asked.

I looked at the closed journal. Part of me wanted to touch it at once and demand every answer it had refused to give us. Another part remembered what happened the last time it showed me something. I placed both hands on the table instead.

“I am.”

Caius took the chair beside mine. He didn’t remind me to be careful because he knew I already understood the risk. Instead, he opened one of the smaller journals we had studied together during my training. Its pages held symbols he had patiently taught me to recognize, one lesson at a time.

“We start the same way as before,” he said. “No touching anything until we’ve read every page around the warning.”

I nodded and pulled the smaller journal closer. The symbols had once looked like meaningless lines carved into the page. Now I understood some marked bloodlines, while others warned of danger or protection. One symbol continued appearing beside every reference to a hidden child.

I pointed to it.

\ “This one.”

Caius leaned closer. The mark resembled a circle divided by three lines, with a smaller mark placed beneath it. We had seen it before, but never enoupgh times to understand what it meant.

“It appeared beside the warning,” I said.

“And beside two older entries concerning children removed from their birth packs,” Caius replied. “Pryor found another reference last night.”

A name my

He reached for a loose sheet resting beneath the journal. Pryor had copied a page too damage. to move from the archives. The same divided circle appeared at the top, followed by several lines written in an older form of the eastern language.

I read the first sentence twice.

“The child must remain beyond the reach of those named as blood.”

Caius said nothing. I read it again, hoping I had misunderstood one of the words. The meaning remained the same. Whoever wrote it had separated blood from family as though they weren’t always the same thing.

“What comes next?” he asked.

I followed the line beneath it. Several words had faded, but the final part remained clear enough to understand. I felt Vaela lift her head inside me before I finished reading.

“Those who carry the child may not be those who created her.”

The library became silent.

I looked at Caius. His face revealed little, but the bond carried the change in his thoughts. He had considered the possibility last night because I brought it to him. Seeing it written in an ancient record made the idea harder to dismiss.

“This could refer to someone else,” I said.

“It could.”

Neither of us believed that was likely. The symbol connected the passage to the same warning that named Derek and Helene. Too many pieces were beginning to point toward the same answer.

I turned back to the old journal.

“Why would anyone give me to them?”

Caius rested one hand beside mine on the table. He didn’t offer a guess only to make the silence easier. That was one of the things I trusted most about him. When he didn’t know, he never pretended otherwise.

“We’ll find that answer too.”

I reached for the page but stopped before touching it. The old fear returned, not strong enough to drive me away, but enough to remind me what my gift could do. Vaela remained close without pushing. She understood this choice belonged to both of us.

‘Do you feel anything?’ I asked her.

A name removed

‘Waiting.’

‘From the journal?’

‘From something beneath it.’

I looked down.

The copied page rested over another sheet of parchment. I moved the first one aside and found a piece of paper much darker with age. Caius had not placed it there, and neither of us had seen it when we sat down.

“Was this here before?” I asked.

“No.”

He stood and examined the table before looking toward the library doors. The guards outside had not entered, and Pryor had left before we arrived. No one should have been able to place anything beneath the copy without being noticed.

I looked at the page again.

The divided circle filled the top corner. Beneath it was another symbol I had never seen, one shaped like two wolves facing away from each other. A line connected them through a small mark at the center.

Vaela pressed closer.

‘Touch it.’

I drew my hand back.

‘Why?’

‘Because it knows us.’

I told Caius what she said. He moved his chair closer until our arms touched. His attention remained fixed on the page, but he didn’t reach for it.

“Only if you’re certain,” he said.

“I’m not.”

“Then we wait.”

I looked at the unknown symbol again. Waiting had once protected me because I had no other choice. Now it felt like allowing someone else to keep deciding how much truth I deserved. I placed one finger against the lower edge of the parchment.

A name removed

Nothing happened.

I released a breath I hadn’t realized I was holding. Caius didn’t move. I pressed my hand fully against the page, keeping my thoughts on the library and the bond between us. The paper warmed beneath my palm.

The writing began to change.

Faded lines darkened one after another until the page became clear. The symbols moved into an order I could read, though the language should have been too old for me to understand. Vaela read with me from somewhere inside my mind.

“The child was taken before the first moon.”

Caius looked at me.

“What do you see?”

I read the next line.

“Her name was removed so those searching would never find her.”

The warmth in the page climbed through my hand. Images pressed against the edge of my thoughts, but they didn’t become a full vision. I saw a woman carrying a wrapped infant through rain, then a doorway opening before her. I couldn’t see the woman’s face.

“Isla.”

“I’m here.”

Caius’s voice kept me connected to the library. I forced myself to read the final line rather than follow the image. The words became darker than the rest.

“She was placed with Derek and Helene under sealed orders.”

I pulled my hand away.

The page went blank at once. Every word disappeared except the divided circle and the two wolves facing apart. Caius reached for the parchment, but before his fingers touched it, another line appeared.

This one wasn’t written in the old language.

It was written in mine.

The woman who carried you is still alive.

The broken seal

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 247

The broken seal

(Caius)

The words remained on the page while neither of us moved. Isla stared at them as though looking away might make them disappear. I kept my attention on her instead of the parchment. The bond carried disbelief, fear, and a question she did not know how to ask.

The woman who carried you is still alive.

I read the sentence again, searching for another meaning. There was none. Whoever had written those words wanted Isla to understand them exactly as they appeared.

“Do you believe it?” she asked.

“I believe the journal showed you those words for a reason.” I refused to call them truth before we had proof. The journal had revealed memories, warnings, and hidden records, but it had also shown a future that hadn’t happened. We needed to understand which kind of message this was.

Isla looked back at the parchment. The sentence remained even though every other word had vanished. Her fingers rested near the page without touching it again. I could feel Vaela close inside her, listening to everything.

“She carried me,” Isla said. “That does not mean she gave birth to me.”

“No.” I moved the parchment farther from her hand. “We should not decide what it means before we find the rest.”

She accepted the answer, though I knew it gave her little comfort.

I crossed toward the shelves holding Wraithbone’s oldest records before stopping. My hand rested on the spine of one of the ledgers as a thought settled in. After a moment, I let out a quiet breath.

“These won’t tell us who your parents were, ”

Isla looked at me.

“Why not?”

“Because these are Wraithbone records.” I turned back to face her. “If Derek and Helene truly raised you in Ashcrest, your birth should have been recorded there, not here.”

She looked back at the parchment.

“Unless I wasn’t born in Ashcrest.”

“Exactly.”

The broken seal

The thought settled between us.

I looked toward the shelves again.

“There is another possibility.”

“What?”

“My family has protected the old laws for generations.” I looked back at her. “If one of the Alpha Kings before me knew about a Celestial child, they may have kept private records separate from the pack archives.”

“You think someone in your bloodline knew about me?”

“I don’t know.” I shook my head once. “But if they did, they may have left something behind.” /

I turned toward another section of the library.

Those shelves held journals and sealed records that only the Alpha King had permission to read. Very few wolves even knew they existed. If answers had been hidden anywhere inside Wraithbone, that was where I intended to begin looking.

I reached for the oldest journal on the highest shelf. Dust covered the leather, telling me it hadn’t been opened in many years. My father had shown me this section before I became Alpha King and made me promise never to ignore the records left behind. Today, I finally understood why that promise mattered.

I carried the journal back to the table and placed it carefully between us. The cover bore the Blackthorn crest pressed into faded leather, worn by time but still recognizable. There was no title on the front, only a date carved into the corner nearly three hundred years ago. I opened it slowly, expecting pages filled with ordinary records. Instead, the first page held a single sentence.

“For the Alpha Kings who come after me, there are truths the Council must never possess.”

I read the sentence twice before turning the page.

The next several pages contained no names. No dates. Only observations written by one Alpha King for the next. Each entry spoke of unusual wolves, hidden gifts, and laws that had been forgotten outside Wraithbone. Then one line brought me to a stop.

If another Celestial child is ever born, trust the journals before you trust the Council.

I felt Isla’s eyes lift to mine.

“Someone knew, she whispered,

“Yes,” I said quietly. “Long before either of us was born.”

The broken seal

I lowered my eyes to the next paragraph.

The handwriting changed slightly, telling me another Alpha King had continued where the first had stopped. The message had been added decades later, yet it carried the same purpose.

The journals remember what men choose to forget.

I looked at Isla.

“I think my ancestors understood these journals better than anyone else.”

She rested her hand lightly against the open page.

“And they knew one day someone would need them again.”

“I believe they did.”

I turned to the next page, wondering what else my bloodline had been protecting for centuries.

The next page held what looked like an ordinary family record. Names filled the first half, each followed by dates and brief notes written in the same careful hand. Then I reached the bottom of the page, where one line had been covered with dark wax instead of ink. Pressed into the hardened seal was the same divided circle we had found inside the journals.

Isla leaned closer.

“What does it say?”

I studied the seal for a moment before looking at her.

“I don’t know,” I admitted. “Whoever sealed this wanted to make certain no Alpha King read it until the right time.”

My fingers rested lightly against the edge of the page.

“The question is whether that time has finally arrived.”

I kept my hand beside the page without touching the seal. Centuries had passed since someone, pressed that mark into the wax, yet it remained unbroken. Whoever left it behind hadn’t been trying to hide ordinary history. They had been protecting something they believed the wrong hands should never find.

Isla studied the seal before looking at me.

“If we break it…”

“We can’t undo it,” I said.

She nodded slowly.

The broken seal

“Whatever is beneath it has stayed hidden for hundreds of years.”

“It has.”

Yak

The library fell silent around us. Neither of us reached for the seal. It was as though the entire room waited for us to decide what came next. I couldn’t get rid of the feeling that this moment had been leading toward us long before either of us was born.

I met Isla’s eyes…

“Once we read what’s beneath this seal, there won’t be any going back.”

“There never was,” she replied quietly.

She placed her hand over mine.

“I’ve spent my whole life searching for the truth, Caius.”

She never looked away.

“I’m done living with questions.”

I looked down at the ancient seal one last time.

Then I slipped my thumb beneath its edge.

The wax cracked.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 248

The thread

The thread

(Caius)

The page beneath wasn’t blank.

Small, careful handwriting covered it from top to bottom. The ink had faded with age but remained legible, each word placed with the precision of someone who understood that whatever they were committing to paper would outlast them by generations.

I read the first line aloud.

“The child was brought to us by the Elder himself. We were told she was the last of her line and that her survival depended on no one knowing what she was.”

Isla went very st e me.

I kept rea

“We the record. We agreed to say nothing. What we didn’t agree to was what er didn’t want the child hidden. He wanted her gone. When we refused he ay.”

d was still over mine on the table.

going,” she said.

rned the page.

The handwriting changed here. A different hand. Another Alpha King continuing where the first had stopped, the way the earlier journal had been passed forward.

“The child was moved before we could intervene. We were told she died. We didn’t believe it then. I don’t believe it now. If you’re reading this it means the seal held and the right person finally came looking. Find the ivate correspondence from three hundred years ago. The truth is there.

We didn’t w one day someone would need it.”

I set or a long moment before looking at me.

ars,” she said.

KIZA

The thread

“Yes,” I said.

“This didn’t start with Evander,” she said.

“No,” I said. “Evander was just the most recent one willing to carry it forward.”

She looked at the shelves.

“The Elder’s private correspondence,” she said. “Do you have it?”

I thought about it.

Wraithbone’s archives went back further than most packs bothered to preserve. My father had impressed that on me early. Keep everything. You never know what becomes relevant.

“If it exists anywhere,” I said, “it’s here.”

1 stood and crossed to the far end of the library where the oldest correspondence was stored. Not ledgers. Not journals. Letters. Sealed and catalogued by date and sender going back as far as the pack’s records reached.

Three hundred years.

I found the section and ran my finger along the spines until I found the right decade. I pulled a bundle of correspondence tied with a cord that had dried and darkened with age and carried it back to the table.

Isla watched me untie it carefully.

The letters inside were fragile. I handled them the way I handled everything that required care, without rushing, without forcing anything that wasn't ready to give.

The third letter in the bundle stopped me.

The seal on the outside was broken. Someone had read this before and resealed it badly, the wax pressed down unevenly, the impression incomplete.

Someone had been here before us.

Not recently. The damage to the seal was old. But someone had read this letter and put it back and said nothing.

I opened it.

The handwriting inside was different from anything else in the bundle. Formal. The kind of hand that belonged to someone accustomed to writing things that would be carried a long distance and read by people who hadn't been present for the original conversation.

The thread

I read it once.

Then I set it down on the table between us and looked at Isla.

"Read it," I said.

She leaned forward and read it slowly. I watched her face as she did. I'd learned to read her the way I read most things that mattered, carefully and without rushing to conclusions.

Her expression didn't change until the final paragraph.

Then something moved through it that I hadn't seen before. Not grief exactly. Not anger. Something underneath both of those things that didn't have a clean name.

She sat back.

"She didn't give me up willingly," she said.

“No,” I said. “She didn’t.”

“She fought it.”

“According to this, yes.”||||||

Isla looked at the letter on the table between us.

“And the Elder told her I died,” she said.

“Yes,” I said.

“She thinks I’m dead.”

The words landed between us and neither of us reached for them immediately. Some things needed a moment before they could be handled.

I watched Isla sit with it.

She didn’t fall apart. She didn’t reach for me through the bond. She sat with both hands in her lap and looked at the letter and let the information settle into her the way she let most difficult things settle. Fully. Without flinching.

After a while she looked at me.

“She’s still alive,” she said. “The journal said so.”

“Yes,” I said.

“Which means she’s spent however long believing her child is dead.”

“Yes,” I said.

The the rad

Isla looked at the letter one more time.

Then she looked at the shelves.

“We need to find her,” she said.

It wasn’t a question.

“Yes,” I said. “We do.”

I looked at the letter one more time before folding it carefully and setting it aside.

“Zeron is already in Ashcrest,” I said. “If this Elder’s network stretched that far he may be able to find a thread worth pulling.”

Isla looked at me.

“You think the trail leads to Ashcrest?”

“I think everything in this conspiracy leads back to the same places,” I said. “The same names. The same network. We’ve been pulling at different ends of the same thread.”

She was quiet for a moment.

“Then we pull harder,” she said.

Isla looked at the folded letter.

“Send word to Zeron today,” she said. “Tell him what we found. Tell him to look for any record connected to an Elder who operated three hundred years ago and left no death record.”

“He’ll need more than that,” I said.

“Tell him to look for gaps,” she said. “The same way we look for them here. Names that appear and then stop. Dates that don’t add up. Someone covered their tracks but nobody covers everything.”

I looked at her.

She was right.

“I’ll send word today,” I said.

I stayed where I was after she moved away.

The thread was there.

We just had to follow it without letting him know we were pulling.

princess jody

I had written send word to Zeron tonight, but I decided having is happen during the day worked better so i changed it.

THE ALPHA’S

Regret

MOLLY CAMBRIA

The Alpha’s Regret

Molly Cambria | Completed (18+

A rejected mate returns-stronger, fiercer, and untouchable.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 249

tha Hd flog

The third finding

(Calus)

Pryor found me in the office two hours later.

I’d left Isla in the library with strict instructions not to touch anything while I handled the correspondence that had accumulated during the Council visit. She hadn’t argued which told me she was still sitting with everything the sealed letter had revealed.

Pryor set a envelope on the desk in front of me.

“From Zeron,” he said.

I looked up.

“That was fast,” I said.

“He sent it before you sent yours,” Pryor said. “They crossed on the road.”

I broke the seal and read it.

Zeron had been thorough. He always was. The report covered three separate findings, each one building on the last in the way Zeron built everything, methodically, without gaps.

The first was the confirmation I’d already suspected. Torvin hadn’t died from the wolfsbane alone. A second dose had been administered after he was already confined and weakened from the first exposure. Someone had gone into that cell knowing exactly what they were doing and exactly how much it would take.

The second finding was the name of the man who had accessed Torvin's cell in the days before his death. Cael. A Council courier who had served as a formal link between Ashcrest and the High Council for several years before vanishing from every official record shortly after Torvin died.

The third finding was what stopped me.

Zeron had traced Cael's movements after Torvin's death as far as the northern border before the trail went cold. But before it did he had found something else. Cael had a patron. Someone providing him with coin and housing well above what a Council courier's salary could account for. The payments came through a third party but Zeron had traced them back to an account connected to a name that hadn't appeared in any active record for over twenty years.

A name that was supposed to belong to a dead man.

The third finding

I set the letter down and looked at the ceiling for a moment.

Everything Isla and I had found in the library pointed in the same direction. The sealed journal. The letter. The Elder who had wanted her gone rather than hidden. And now Zeron's report confirming that someone had been operating through proxies and couriers and

Council members for decades.

It wasn't over when Evander was arrested.

It had never been about Evander.

I looked at Pryor.

"Sit down," I said.

He sat.

I told him what Zeron had found. Then I told him what Isla and I had found in the library. The sealed journal. The private correspondence. The woman who had carried Isla and believed her dead for however long this had been going on.

Pryor listened without interrupting the way he always listened when something required his full attention rather than just his presence.

When I finished he was quiet for a moment.

“The name Zeron traced the payments to,” he said. “Do you have it?”

I slid the letter across the desk toward him.

He read it once and set it back down.

“I know that name,” he said.

I looked at him.

“Not personally,” he said. “But it appears in Wraithbone’s older records. Twice. Both times in correspondence with Alpha Kings who came before your father.” He paused. “I always assumed it was a clerical error. The dates didn’t make sense for a living person.”

“They make sense now,” I said.

Pryor looked at the letter again.

“He’s been operating for a very long time,” he said.

“Yes,” I said. “And he knows we found Evander. Which means he knows we’re looking.”

The third finding

“What do you want me to tell Zeron?”

I thought about it.

“Tell him to follow the northern trail as far as it goes,” I said. “Tell him to look for Cael. If Cael is still in contact with his patron there’ll be a way to trace it. And tell him to look for a woman. Someone kept hidden. Someone who lost a child and was told she died.”

Pryor wrote it down without asking why.

That was one of the things I valued most about him. He understood which questions to ask and which ones to leave alone.

“Anything else?” he said.

“Tell him to be careful,” I said. “Whoever this man is he’s had decades to build his network. Zeron won’t see him coming if he isn’t looking in the right direction.”

Pryor nodded once and stood.

“I’ll have the response sent within the hour,” he said.

He left and I stayed where I was and looked at Zeron's letter on the desk in front of me.

The thread was there.

We just had to follow it without letting him know we were pulling.

I leaned back in my chair and looked at the ceiling.

Three hundred years.

That was how long this had been running. Not a recent conspiracy. Not something that had started with Evander or even with the generation before him. Something that had been carefully passed forward, from one willing participant to the next, each one carrying the same objective.

Keep the Celestial wolf line from emerging.

I thought about the Alpha Kings who had come before me. The ones who had found the sealed journal and chosen to protect it rather than destroy it. They had known something was wrong and couldn't stop it but they had done the one thing they could. They had left a record.

For me.

For this moment.

The third finding

I thought about Isla in the library with her hand over mine on the table, telling me she was done living with questions. Every answer we'd found had led to another question and she had met every one of them without flinching.

She was going to want to find the woman who carried her.

I already knew that. She'd said it plainly and she'd meant it and nothing that had come out of Zeron's report would change it. If anything it made it more urgent. If the man behind this network found out we were looking he would move her. Use her. Eliminate her.

Whatever she represented to him she was leverage and he had been holding that leverage for a very long time.

I needed to find her first.

We keep reading

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 250

We keep reading

(Isla)

Caius came back to the library an hour after he'd left.

I heard him before I saw him. His footsteps in the corridor had a different quality than when he'd left. Not heavier. More certain. Like someone who had found something worth bringing back.

He sat down across from me and set Zeron's letter on the table between us.

I looked at it then at him.

"Tell me," I said.

He did.

He went through it in the order Zeron had written it. The second dose of wolfsbane administered to Torvin after he was already confined. The Council courier named Cael who had accessed Torvin's cell in the days before his death and disappeared from every official record shortly after. The payments traced through a third party back to an account connected to a name that hadn't appeared in any active record for over twenty years.

A name that was supposed to belong to a dead man.

I listened to all of it without interrupting.

When he finished I looked at the letter on the table.

"Cael was the one who administered the second dose," I said.

"That's what the evidence suggests," Caius said.

"And whoever paid him has been operating for decades through people like Cael and Evander without ever appearing directly."

"Yes," he said.

I didn't answer her immediately.

Torvin had found out the chain of command went above Rodan. He'd been getting close to the truth and someone had sent Cael into that cell to make sure he never got close enough to say it out loud. The same network that had kept me hidden for twenty years had silenced the one person who might have exposed it earlier.

We keep reading

Vaela stirred inside me.

Not with anger. With something colder than anger.

'He's been doing this a long time,' she said.

'Yes,' I said.

'Torvin isn't the first, she said.

I looked at the letter.

425 Ports

She was right. Someone who had been operating for three hundred years and was still operating now hadn't stayed hidden by being careless. There had been others before Torvin. Others who had gotten too close and been removed before they could speak.

I didn't say that to Caius yet.

I was still working out what it meant.

"Pryor recognised the name," Caius said. "It appears in Wraithbone's older records twice. Both times in correspondence with Alpha Kings before my father."

I looked at him.

"He's been watching Wraithbone," I said.

"Yes," Caius said. "For a long time."

"Because of the journals," I said. "He knew Wraithbone had them. He knew if anyone was going to find the truth it would be the Alpha King who took them seriously."

Caius looked at me.

"That's why the Alpha Kings before your father kept the sealed journal," I said. "They knew someone was watching. They couldn't stop it but they could leave a record that would survive them."

“Yes,” Caius said quietly. “I think that’s exactly right.”

I looked at the folded letter from the sealed correspondence. The one that had confirmed the woman who carried me hadn’t given me up willingly. That she’d fought it. That she thought! was dead.

“He told her I died,” I said.

“Yes,” Caius said.

We keep reading

25 Port

“And then he used Cael and Evander and Rodan to make sure I stayed buried.”

“Yes.”

“But the journal found me anyway,” I said.

Caius was quiet for a moment.

“Yes,” he said. “It did.”

I looked at the shelves.

Somewhere in all of this was a woman who had lost a child three hundred years ago and never stopped carrying that loss. Who had spent however long believing the thing she’d fought to protect hadn’t survived.

I thought about what that felt like.

Not abstractly. I thought about it the way I thought about things that had actually happened to me. The shack. The chain. The years of being told there was nothing inside me worth anything. What it felt like to carry something that heavy without anyone to put it down in front of.

She’d been carrying something heavier than that.

Vaela was very close inside me.

‘She’s waiting,’ Vaela said. ‘She doesn’t know it but she is.’

‘We’ll find her,’ I said.

‘I know,’ Vaela said. ‘That’s not what I mean.’

I looked at the letter again.

‘What do you mean?’ I asked.

‘I mean she never stopped, Vaela said. ‘Whatever he did to her she never stopped.’

I held that for a moment without speaking.

Then I looked at Caius.

“I want to find her before he knows we’re looking,” I said.

“I know,” he said. “Zeron is already following the trail.”

“It’s not enough,” I said. “Zeron is looking from Ashcrest. We need to be looking from here

We keep leading too.” I looked at the shelves. “There’s more in this library. There has to be. He’s been watching Wraithbone for three hundred years which means Wraithbone has been watching him too even if they didn’t know what they were looking at.”

Caius followed my gaze to the shelves.

“You think there’s more,” he said.

“I think the Alpha Kings before you left more than one record,” I said. “I think they left everything they found and hoped the right person would know what to do with it.”

He looked at me.

“Then we keep reading,” he said.

“Yes,” I said. “We do.”

Caius stood and moved toward the shelves without being asked.

I watched him pull the next bundle of correspondence from the section we hadn’t reached yet and carry it back to the table.

He set it down between us.

Neither of us said anything.

We didn’t need to.

I pulled the first letter from the bundle and began to read and Caius did the same beside me and the library held its quiet around us and outside Wraithbone went about its

afternoon without knowing what we were looking for or how close we were getting to finding it.