The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 251

Lyr

Lyr

(Caius)

The third bundle was the one that mattered.

I knew it before I opened it. The cord binding it was different from the others. Thicker. Tied in a specific knot that I recognised from Wraithbone's older security protocols. Whatever was inside had been sealed with more care than standard correspondence warranted.

I cut the cord and set it aside.

Isla looked up from the letter she was reading.

I spread the contents across the table between us.

Not letters this time. Documents. Formal records written in the hand of an Alpha King I didn't recognise from the signature but could place by the era from the style of the parchment. Three pages. Each one numbered in the top corner.

I started with the first.

It was a timeline. Someone had documented every significant event they could connect to the name we'd been tracing. Dates going back further than Zeron's report had reached. Each entry brief. Each one building toward a pattern that became impossible to dismiss by the second page.

"What is it?" Isla asked.

I passed her the first page and kept reading the second.

The second page was a list of names. Wolves who had died under circumstances the Alpha King writing this had considered suspicious. Not all of them were Celestials. Some were historians. Some were healers. Some were simply wolves who had been asking the wrong questions at the wrong time.

Torvin's name wasn't there. This record was too old for that.

But the pattern was the same.

Anyone who got close enough to see the shape of what was happening was removed before they could say it out loud.

I set the second page down and picked up the third.

This one was different from the others. Less formal. The handwriting was the same but the tone had changed. Less documentation. More personal, Like someone writing at the end of a long day when the careful language had worn thin.

I found what I am certain is a bloodline record he altered. The original is gone but the coty he missed is here. I am enclosing it with this document. “If you are reading this then the copy survived and what it contains is still true.

I looked at the bottom of the page.

A smaller piece of parchment had been folded and tucked beneath it. Older than the document itself. The edges were fragile and I unfolded it carefully.

It was a birth record.

One entry. A child born to a woman whose name had been partially obscured. Not destroyed Obscured. Someone had gone over it with ink but not carefully enough. Three letters were still visible at the start of the name.

Lyr.

Beneath the mother’s name was the child’s.

No name written. Only a symbol. The same divided circle we had found in the journals.

And beneath that a single word.

Celestial.

I set the parchment down.

Isla was already looking at me. She’d finished the first page and had been watching my face while I read the third.

“What does it say?” she asked.

I slid the third page and the birth record across to her.

She read them in silence.

I watched her face the way I always watched her face when something significant was landing. She read the third page first then picked up the birth record and held it carefully with both hands and read it twice.

Then she set it down and looked at the three letters.

Lyr.

Lvi

“That’s her name,” she said. Not a question.

“The beginning of it,” I said.

She looked at the symbol where the child’s name should have been.

“They didn’t record my name,” she said.

“No,” I said. “They recorded what you were instead.”

She was quiet for a moment.

“He altered the bloodline record,” she said. “But whoever wrote this found the copy he missed.”

“Yes,” I said.

“Which means somewhere there’s a complete record,” she said. “One with her full name. One that shows exactly where she came from and who she is.”

“Yes,” I said. “And he’s spent three hundred years making sure nobody finds it.”

She looked at the birth record again.

“Lyr,” she said quietly.

I let her have the moment.

She wasn’t falling apart. She was doing what she always did with things that mattered. Holding them properly. Giving them the weight they deserved without letting that weight pull her under.

After a while she looked up.

“The copy survived,” she said. “Which means whoever hid it knew it would be needed.”

“Yes,” I said.

“The same way the sealed journal survived,” she said. “The same way the Alpha Kings kept passing the record forward.”

“They were building toward this,” I said. “They didn’t know when or who. But they knew someone would come looking.”

She looked at the divided circle symbol on the birth record.

“That symbol,” she said. “It’s in the journals. It was on the sealed journal. It’s here.”

425 Ponty

“Yes,” I said.

“Someone used it consistently across three hundred years,” she said. “Not just in the journals. In official records. In correspondence. It’s a marker.”

I looked at the symbol.

She was right. I had seen it in enough places now to know it wasn’t decorative. It was intentional. Someone had been leaving it as a way of connecting records that were otherwise hidden from each other. A thread running through three centuries of documents that only made sense if you were looking for it.

“Whoever left this marker,” I said, “was on our side.”

“Yes,” she said. “And they’ve been on our side for a very long time.”

She picked up the birth record one more time and looked at the three visible letters.

Then she set it down carefully and looked at me.

“We need the full name,” she said.

“Yes,” I said.

“Which means we need the original record,” she said. “The one he altered.”

“Or someone who knows where he hid it,” I said.

She held my gaze.

“Cael,” she said.

I looked at her.

“If Cael administered the second dose to Torvin on his orders,” she said, “then Cael knows where the records are. He’s been inside the network long enough to know where things are kept.”

“Zeron is already looking for Cael,” I said.

“Then tell him what we found,” she said. “Tell him what to ask when he finds him.”

I looked at the birth record on the table between us.

Three letters.

A symbol.

A child whose name had been replaced with what she was.

“Pryor can get word to Zeron today,” I said. “He needs to know what to look for

She nodded once and looked back at the birth record.

I watched her trace the three visible letters with her eyes without touching the parchment.

Lyr.

Somewhere out there was a woman with that name who had spent three hundred years believing her daughter was dead.

We were going to change that.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 252

The divided circle

(Caius)

I mind linked Pryor.

‘Come to the library.’

‘Right away, Alpha King.’

I looked back at Isla while we waited. Her eyes remained on the birth record. She hadn’t touched it again but I knew her thoughts hadn’t left the three letters written across the page.

Lyr.

Less than a minute later, Pryor entered the library.

His eyes moved from me to Isla before settling on the records spread across the table. He understood immediately that we’d found something important.

“Alpha King.”

“Pryor.”

He stepped closer to the table.

“You said you found something.”

I picked up the birth record and handed it to him.

“Read the mother’s name.”

Pryor accepted the parchment with care. His eyes moved over the faded writing before stopping near the top of the page. He studied it for several moments.

“I can only make out the beginning.”

“So can we.”

“Lyr,” he read quietly.

“That’s all that’s left.”

He lowered the parchment and looked at me.

“Someone tried to erase her.”

“They did.”

“But they didn’t finish the job.”

Pryor looked back at the birth record.

“The ink was added later,” he said. “Whoever covered the name wasn’t the one who wrote the original”

The divided-ercle-

Inodded.

“We reached the same conclusion.”

He studied the parchment again before placing it carefully on the table.

“If this copy survived, there may be others.”

“That’s what we’re hoping!”

Pryor looked at Isla.

“Have you ever seen this symbol anywhere before you came to Wraithbone?”

She shook her head.

“No.”

He looked back at me.

“What are your orders?”

“Send word to Zeron.”

“What do you want him to look for?”

“Every record connected to the divided circle. Every mention of a woman whose name begins with Lyr. If Cael is found alive, I want him questioned before anyone else. I want every place he’s been, every record he’s handled, and every name he’s been ordered to protect.”

Pryor nodded once.

“I’ll send the message immediately.”

Pryor gathered the copied records from the table before looking at me again.

“Should I tell Zeron about the birth record as well?”

“Yes.”

I looked down at the parchment one more time.

“Tell him the mother’s name wasn’t destroyed. It was hidden. I want him searching for altered records, not only missing ones. Whoever covered this name left enough behind for us to find it.”

Pryor nodded once.

“I’ll include that in the message.”

“Tell him not to rely only on the official archives.”

He looked at me.

“You believe there are more copies.”

“I do.”

The divided errcle-

Hooked at the birth record again.

“Someone protected this one for three hundred years. I don’t believe they trusted a single copy to carry the truth.”

Pryor inclined his head.

“I’ll send the message immediately.”

He gathered the copied records and left the library.

Isla and I remained where we were, our eyes returning to the birth record resting between us. Three letters had survived when everything else had been hidden. It wasn’t much, but it was the first real piece of her past we’d ever held.

Neither of us reached for the records again.

There was no need to rush. We’d uncovered more today than we had since the journal first led us down this path. Every answer pointed us toward another piece of the same truth.

I looked around the library.

“My ancestors knew this day would come.”

Isla followed my gaze.

“They left everything they could.”

“They left enough.”

She looked back at the birth record.

“And now it’s our turn to finish what they started.”

I nodded once.

“We won’t stop until every missing name is found.”

My eyes settled on the remaining documents spread across the table.

“We’ve been following the journals,” I said. “Now we need to follow the people.”

Isla looked at me.

“The ones who protected these records.”

“Yes.”

I picked up one of the older pages and read through it again.

“Every Alpha King who added to these journals left more than history behind They left directions for the ones who would come after them.”

She nodded.

“So somewhere in these records, one of them explained why they chose to protect my bloodline.”

The divided-ercle-

believe so.”

Hooked at the stack of journals still waiting beside us.

“We’ve only uncovered part of what they left behind.”

Isla followed my gaze.

“Then we keep reading.”

I met her eyes.

“Until we find the page they wanted us to see.”

I reached for the next journal, and opened it near the middle.

Most of the pages contained ordinary records. Harvests. Trade agreements. Meetings between Alpha Kings. Nothing connected to Celestials or hidden bloodlines.

Then a folded piece of parchment slipped free and landed on the table between us.

Neither of us reached for it right away.

It hadn’t fallen from the journal by chance. Someone had placed it there, knowing another Alpha King would eventually find it.

I unfolded it carefully.

Only two lines had been written.

If the child survives, do not search where she disappeared.

I felt Isla looking at me.

“There’s more.”

I lowered my eyes to the final line.

*Search where she was meant to go.

Neither of us spoke.

The words changed everything we thought we knew.

If the journal was telling the truth, loia hadn’t been taken to the wrong place.

*She had been kept from the place she was always meant to reach.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 253

Where she was meant to ge

Where she was meant to go

(Caius)

I read the two lines again before folding the parchment halfway.

Neither of us spoke. The words carried too much meaning to rush past them. Whoever had written them expected another Alpha King to understand what they meant.

If the child survives, do not search where she disappeared.

Search where she was meant to go.

I placed the parchment beside the birth record.

“They’re connected.”

Isla looked from one document to the other.

“You think they were written by the same person?”

“I think they were left for the same reason.”

She leaned closer.

“They wanted to stop someone from making the wrong choice.”

“Yes.”

I lowered my eyes to the journals again,

“Every clue we’ve found has pointed us away from Ashcrest.”

She thought about that for a moment.

“The journal told us my mother is alive.”

I nodded.

“The birth record told us part of her name.”

She looked at the folded parchment.

“And now this tells us not to search where I disappeared.”

I looked at her.

“Someone expected another Alpha King to believe the answer was in Ashcrest.”

“But it isn’t.”

“No.”

Silence settled between us once again.

Where she was meant to go reached for the journal the loose parchment had fallen from. This time I searched every page instead of Teading time by line. Whoever had hidden one message could have hidden another.

Most of the entries spoke about ordinary matters.

Pack agreements.

Trade disputes.

Seasonal gatherings.

Nothing connected to Celestials.

Then my thumb caught something unusual.

Several pages near the back were thicker than the rest.

I stopped turning them.

“Isla.”

She looked up.

“What is it?”

I pressed two fingers against the edge of the page.

“These were joined together.”

She looked more closely.

“They’re supposed to be separate.”

“They are.”

I looked at the binding.

“But someone sealed them.”

She stood and walked around the table until she was beside me.\

Together we examined the journal.

The pages hadn’t been damaged by time.

Someone had carefully joined them so they appeared to be one sheet instead of two.

“They were hiding something.”

“They were.”

I studied the edge again.

The work had been done with patience.

Most wolves would never notice it.

Where she was meant to go

Hreached into the drawer beneath the table and removed a thin letter opener.

My father had used it wherever old records needed to be handled.

I slipped the edge between the two pages.

Very little pressure was needed.

The pages separated.

A smaller sheet rested inside.

Neither of us reached for it immediately.

It had been hidden so well that generations of Alpha Kings could have turned these pages without ever finding it.

Whoever placed it there had trusted that one day someone would look closely enough.

I lifted the hidden sheet from the journal.

The writing was faded but still clear enough to read.

Only a few lines had been written.

*The child was never meant for Ashcrest.

I looked at Isla.

She had already read the first sentence.

I lowered my eyes again.

*If she reaches Ashcrest, the promise has already been broken.

A long silence followed.

“The promise,” Isla said quietly.

“What promise?”

“I don’t know.”

Neither did I.

I turned the page over.

Nothing.

Only the two lines.

No name.

No signature.

No explanation.

Where she was meant to go placed the hidden sheet beside the birth record

Three documents.

Three different hands.

All pointing toward the same truth.

Someone had planned Isla’s life long before she was born.

Someone else had changed that plan.

I looked at the journals surrounding us.

“My ancestors weren’t simply recording history.”

Isla met my eyes.

“They were protecting it.”

I nodded once.

“And warning the Alpha Kings who came after them.”

She looked back at the hidden page.

“If Ashcrest was never my destination…”

Her words faded.

I finished the thought for her.

“Then somewhere there is another place we haven’t found.”

The library felt different after that.

The answers no longer seemed buried inside old books.

They were leading us somewhere.

We simply hadn’t discovered where yet.

I looked back at the hidden page.

“If this is true, we’ve been asking the wrong question.”

Isla studied the two lines again.

“You mean we’ve been asking where I disappeared.”

“Yes.”

“And we should be asking where I was supposed to go.”

I nodded.

“These journals have given us everything they can.”

She looked around the library.

“You think our answers aren’t here anymore.”

“I think the next piece isn’t waiting on these shelves.”

Her eyes returned to the birth record.

“It’s waiting somewhere else.”

I folded the hidden page and placed it with the other documents.

“Zeron is searching Ashcrest.”

She looked at me.

“And if he finds nothing?”

“Then we stop searching inside Wraithbone and Ashcrest.”

“Where do we go?”

“I don’t know yet.”

I looked at the divided circle carved into the birth record.

“But I’m certain the trail doesn’t end here.”

Isla looked at the records one last time before gathering them into a careful stack.

“Then we wait for Zeron.”

“Yes.”

I closed the journal and rested my hand on its worn cover.

“If he finds the next piece, we’ll know where this trail leads.”

“And if he doesn’t?”

I met her eyes.

“Then we leave Wraithbone ourselves.”

She didn’t hesitate.

“Wherever the truth is.”

I nodded once.

“That’s where we’ll go.”

Our next step no longer depended on another hidden page waiting inside these journals.

Where she was meant to ge depended on where the trail led beyond Wraithbone.

Somments

The northern temiery

The northern territory

(Caius)

The message from Zeron arrived before midday. Pryor brought it directly to the library, where Isla and I had remained after finishing with the journals. One look at his face told me Zeron had found something worth reporting. I took the letter from him and opened it.

“Cael is alive.”

Isla rose from her chair. Pryor remained beside the table while I continued reading. Zeron had found Cael hiding in an abandoned healer’s cottage several miles outside Ashcrest. He had tried to escape when Zeron arrived.

“Did Zeron catch him?” Isla asked.

“He did.” I read the next few lines before looking at her. “Cael is being held somewhere only Zeron and two warriors know about.”

“Good.”

“There is more.”

Zeron had searched the cottage after taking Cael. Beneath one of the floorboards, he’d found several old documents wrapped in cloth. Most meant nothing to him, but one contained a symbol he recognized from Pryor’s message. I already knew which symbol before1 reached the next line

“The divided circle,” Isla said.

“Yes.”

I continued reading. The document wasn’t another birth record or another message from an Alpha King. It was a map. One location north of Wraithbone had been marked with the divided circle.

Pryor stepped closer.

“Does the place have a name?”

“It does.”

I looked at Isla before reading it aloud.

“Silvermere.”

Pryor’s expression changed.

“I haven’t heard that name in years.”

“What is it?” Isla asked.

“An old territory beyond the northern mountains.” Pryor looked at the letter again “The pack that once lived there disappeared from most modem records.”

Isla looked at me.

“Why would Cael have a map leading there?”

That’s what Zeron intends to find out.”

I placed the message beside the birth record. The journals had told as not to search where Isla disappeared. They had told us to search where she was meant to go. Now Cael had been found with something pointing toward a place beyond Wraithbone.

Isia looked down at the name.

“Do you think this is where I was supposed to go?”

“I think we need proof before we decide that.”

“But it could be.”

“Yes”

I looked at Pryor.

“Find everything we have about that territory.”

“I’ll start now.”

“Nothing leaves this library.”

“Understood.”

I returned my attention to Zeron’s message. Cael had hidden the map beneath the floor instead of destroying it. Whatever the place meant, he’d believed the map was worth keeping. That gave Zeron another question to ask him.

“Tell Zeron I want Cael questioned about the map.”

Pryor nodded.

“Anything else?”

“I want to know who gave it to him and why he kept it.”

Isla looked at me.

“And whether someone told him I was supposed to go there.”

“That too.”

Pryor copied the name onto a clean piece of parchment before walking toward the shelves holding Wraithbone’s territorial records. Isla remained beside me while I studied the divided circle. We’d seen that mark too many times for its appearance on the map to be a coincidence.

“How far away is it?” Isla asked.

! days, depending on the route.”

ever been there?”

The northern Emitery

“No.”

thad traveled through most territories under the Crown. The northern mountains weren’t unfamiliar to me, but I’d never had a reason to travel beyond them. The place on Cael’s map had never been included in any route I’d taken.

Pryor stopped near one of the shelves.

“I remember seeing that name when I was younger.”

turned toward him.

Where?”

“One of your father’s territorial records.”

That caught my attention.

“My father knew about it?”

“I don’t know how much he knew.” Pryor removed a ledger and carried it to the table. “I remember it because there was a note beside the name.”

“What did it say?”

“I don’t remember.”

He opened the ledger and began searching.

Isla moved closer while Pryor turned through the pages. Several minutes passed before he stopped near the back. He ran his finger down a list of northern territories. Then he turned the ledger toward me.

“Here.”

Silvermere appeared near the bottom of the page. There were no details about its population or who had once ruled there. Only a short note had been written beside the name. I read the words twice.

Access restricted by order of the Crown.

I looked at Pryor.

“When?”

He checked the date beside the entry.

“Your grandfather was Alpha King.”

That gave the discovery another meaning.

“My

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 254

Hooked back at the entry. My grandfather had died before I was old enough to ask him about the decisions he'd made as Alpha King. My father had never mentioned the northern territory to me either.

Isla looked at the note.

"Maybe your grandfather was protecting it."

"Or protecting something there."

"Celestials?"

"Possibly."

I wasn't going to buil connection, but C mattered.

I looked at

"Make s her answer from guesses. We had enough pieces to know there was a ell us what the records couldn't. If he'd hidden that map, he knew why it s my orders immediately."

"I will tion the map or the territory in front of anyone who doesn't already know."

two warriors only."

d the message and the notes he'd made, word now."

eft the library.

remained beside the table.

ou think Cael will talk?"

He tried to run."

"That doesn't mean he'll answer Zeron,"

"No."

I looked at the map again. Torvin had died because someone wanted him silenced, and Cael had disappeared soon after. Now we'd learned Cael had been hiding something connected to Isla's past.

"Someone else may

Ista looked at

“And they hidden.”

The northle teritory

“That’s what concerns me.”

“We need Zeron back here.”

“Not yet.”

understood immediately.

eeds to finish questioning Cael.”

then?”

en he comes home.”

ler eyes returned to the map.

“And we leave Wraithbone.”

It wasn’t a question.

“If Cael confirms you were supposed to go north, yes.”

She didn’t hesitate.

“I want to go.”

“I know.”

“Even if we don’t know what’s waiting there.”

“That’s why we need to see it ourselves.”

She reached for my hand.

I closed my fingers around hers. We’d learned everything we could from records written hundreds of years ago. The next answer wasn’t waiting for us inside this library.

It was somewhere beyond Wraithbone.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 255

Cael’s confession-

Cael’s confession

(Caius)

Zeron returned to Wraithbone the following afternoon.

I was in my office with Pryor when the mind link came through. Isla sat across from me, reading through the notes we’d made about the northern territory. The moment Zeron told me he was back, I knew we were about to get the answers we’d been waiting for.

‘Come to my office.

‘I’m already on my way.’

I looked at Isla.

“Zeron’s back.”

She closed the papers in front of her.

“Did he say anything about Cael?”

“Not yet.”

A few minutes later, Zeron walked into my office.

He looked tired from the journey, but he didn’t waste time taking a seat. Pryor moved away from my desk to give him space. Isla watched him as he reached inside his coat and removed several folded papers.

“You found something,” I said.

“I did.”

“Cael talked?”

“Eventually.”

I gestured toward the chair.

“Tell us everything.”

Zeron sat and placed the papers on my desk. He looked at Isla before turning his attention back to me. Whatever Cael had told him had been important enough that Zeron hadn't trusted it to a written message. He had brought the answers home himself.

"Cael knew about Silvermere."

Isla looked at him.

"What did he know?"

"Enough to know why the map was hidden."

I waited.

Caf's contestor

Zeron opened one of the folded papers.

"Cael said the map was given to him years ago with orders to keep it hidden. He was told never to destroy it, no matter what happened."

"Who gave it to him?"

"He wouldn't give me a name."

"Wouldn't or couldn't?"

"Wouldn't."

That told me Cael was still protecting someone.

I looked at Zeron.

"What did he say about Isla?"

Zeron turned toward her.

"He said Ashcrest was never where you were supposed to be raised."

The office went quiet.

Isla didn't move.

I already knew what she was going to ask.

"Where was I supposed to go?"

Zeron placed one finger against the name written on the map.

“Silvermere.”

Isla looked down at it.

“He admitted that?”

“Yes.”

“What else did he say?”

Zeron rested his hands on his knees. He had questioned enough prisoners over the years to know when someone was giving him pieces instead of the whole truth. From the look on his face, Cael had made him work for every answer.

“He said there was an agreement.”

I looked at him.

*Between who?”

“He claims he doesn’t know everyone involved.”

“Do you believe him?”

“Some of it.”

Isla looked from Zeron to me.

“What agreement?”

Zeron turned toward her.

“Before you were born, arrangements were made to take you north. Cael didn’t know who your mother was, but he knew a Celestial child was expected. He was told that child had to reach Silvermere.”

I looked at the map again.

“Who was supposed ke her there?”

“Cael wouldn’t sa g?”

“Another thin

“Yes.”

I wasn

Cae ed?”

at her.

keeping secrets for someone. Being captured wasn’t going to erase that loyalty in a d already told us enough to confirm what the journals had been trying to show us.

changed before you ever reached the north.”

one found out.”

reached for my hand.

Who?”

Cael claims he doesn’t know.”

I looked at Zeron.

“Or he isn’t telling you.”

“That’s possible.”

Pryor stepped closer,

“Did he explain b

“No.” Zeron for the o

“ne?”

1 by the time word reached the wolves waiting

Cael’s confeeston

Isla’s fingers closed around mine.

“They thought I was dead.”

Zeron nodded.

“That’s what Cael said.”

The words matched what we'd already discovered.

Parde

Lyr had spent three hundred years believing her daughter was dead. Somewhere along the way, Isla had been taken from the path meant for her and placed with wolves who had hidden what she was.

I looked at Zeron.

"Where is Cael now?"

"Still under guard outside Ashcrest."

"You left the two warriors with him?"

"Yes."

"Good."

Zeron reached for another folded page.

"There's something else."

I waited for him to continue.

"Before I left, I asked Cael what we'd find if we went/north."

Isla looked at him.

"What did he say?"

Zeron unfolded the paper but didn't look down at it.

"He told me not to expect an abandoned territory."

I looked at him.

"What does that mean?"

"He s live there."

mere never disappeared."

Hunderstood what he meant.

“It was hidden.”

“Yes.”

Isla looked at the map again.

“And someone has been protecting it all this time.”

on nodded.

ording to Cael, they still are.”

oked at Isla.

25 Points hat changed what we would find when we traveled north. We weren’t going toward abandoned land and orgotten buildings. There were wolves there who might know exactly what had happened to her.

Did Cael tell you the safest route?”

Zeron shook his head.

“Not yet.”

“Then that’s what I want next.”

“The warriors are still questioning him.”

I nodded.

“Good.”

Isla looked at me.

“We’re still going.”

It wasn’t a question. I had never considered changing my mind because wolves still occupied the territory. If anything, their presence gave us another reason to make the Journey

“We are.”

Pryor looked at me.

“When?”

“As soon as everything is arranged here.”

Leaving Wraithbone required more than packing a few things and heading north. I needed wolves I trusted here o needed to decide who would travel with Isla and me.

pbone.”

“You want him here?”

“want him somewhere I can question him myself if we need more answers.”

Zeron nodded.

“I’ll send word.”

Pryor looked toward the map.

“I’ll begin gathering everything we have about the northern territories.”

“Only what we need for the journey.”

He understood.

“No more searching d journals.”

“No.”

We had spe path, and keep us

Isla et.”

ding what wolves from centuries ago had left behind. They had given us the where it led. Staying here searching for another hidden page would only waiting elsewhere.

dded.

ready.”

oked at Pryor.

You’ll remain here.”

He understood why without asking

“Wraithbone will be taken care of.”

“I know.”

My attention return

“We prepare

“And le

“As soon as we’re ready.”

Her eyes moved toward the map again.

The journals had brought us as far as they could. Cael had confirmed the rest, and there was nothing left to gain by sitting inside my office discussing what might be waiting beyond the northern mountains.

It was time to go north.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 256

The journey ahead

(Isla)

I stayed in Caius’s office after Zeron and Pryor left. The map remained on the desk between us, and my eyes kept returning to the name written across it. Silvermere had meant nothing to me until we found the map. Now I knew I had been meant to grow up there.

Vaela had been quiet through most of the conversation. I could feel her thinking about everything Zeron had told us. There were wolves beyond the northern mountains who might know what happened before I was taken to Ashcrest. They might even know something about the family I came from.

‘We need to go,’ Vaela said.

‘I know.’

‘They may know what happened.’

‘That’s what I’m hoping.’

Caiùs came around the desk and stopped beside me. I looked up at him, knowing he had just as many questions as I did. Neither of us knew what we would find when we reached the northern territory. I wasn't going to let that stop me from going.

"Are you certain?" he asked.

"About going?"

"Yes."

I didn't need time to answer. "If Silvermere was supposed to be my home, I want to know what happened."

He took my hand.

"We'll find out together."

I looked at the map again. Somewhere beyond those mountains was a place where wolves had once waited for me. They had expected a Celestial child who never arrived. Someone there might finally know why.

"What if they recognize the symbol?" I asked.

"I think they will."

"And if they recognize me?"

"Then we ask them everything they know."

I stood and looked at the map one more time. There was nothing else I needed from the old journals right now. We finally had somewhere to go instead of another page to search. I was ready to leave the library behind.

"When do we leave?"

The journey-affead

"In the morning."

I nodded.

"Then I need to get ready."

Caius kept hold of my hand as we left his office. We would leave Wraithbone with Zeron and travel north. I didn't know what we would find there. was ready to find out.

We walked through the pack house together. Wolves we passed greeted us as they normally did, unaware that Caius and I would soon be leaving. There was no reason for everyone to know where we were going. Only the wolves involved in the journey needed to know.

We reached our bedroom and went inside. I walked toward the closet while Caius closed the door behind us. I hadn't thought about what I would need for a journey that could take several days. I didn't know how long we would be gone.

"How much should I pack?"

"Enough for a week."

I turned toward him.

"You think we'll be gone that long?"

"I don't know." Caius walked toward the dresser. "I'd rather have more than we need."

I pulled out a travel bag and placed it on the bed. Caius began gathering his own things while I chose clothes for the colder north. Neither of us talked for several minutes. My thoughts returned to what Zeron had told us.

The territory was still there.

Wolves still lived there.

And three hundred years ago, some of them had been waiting for me.

'They might know our mother,' Vaela said.

The thought stayed with me.

'Maybe.'

'And our father.'

I looked down at the clothes in my hands.

We had found the beginning of my mother's name, but nothing about the wolf who had been my father. I didn't know his name, where he'd come from, or whether he'd known I existed. He could have been connected to the reason I was supposed to go north.

We might finally learn who they both were, Vaela said.

You want to know.'

Caius looked over at me.

“What are you thinking about?”

“My parents.”

He stopped what he was doing.

“Both of them?”

“We keep finding pieces about my mother, but nothing about my father.”

“I’ve been thinking ab

I placed another hadn’t asked too.”

425P e bag. There had been so much to understand about my mother that I s about him. Now I couldn’t stop wondering who he had been. Someone in e a name.

the north m

“What if

“The ew them?”

still alive?”

m too.”

er of them knew what happened to me?”

deserve the truth as much as you do.”

hey did know?”

we’ll find out why they didn’t come for you.”

at was the answer I needed.

A knock came at the door.

“Come in,” Caius called.

Raith entered.

“Alpha King. Luna.”

Caius looked at him.

“Is everything ready?”

“Zeron told me

The journey-affead He did.”-

Raith nodded.

“The warriors are preparing supplies now.”

I looked between them.

“You’re coming with us?”

“If the Alpha King still wants me there.”

Caius answered immediately.

“I do.”

Raith looked at m

“We’ll be read

“Thank yo

He no back to Caius.

e’s staying here.”

e with Pryor.”

closed the door behind him.

Caius.

e four of us.”

with four warriors.”

at wolves would make the journey. Caius had chosen enough warriors to protect us without taking ore than we needed. Zeron and Raith would travel with us, while Pryor and Lira remained in Wraithbone. verything was ready.

“So it’s decided,” I said.

“It is.”

“We go north in the morning.”

Caius nodded.

“We do.”

I returned to pack

By the time needed w and wondered how much we would know when we

Welcome to vennere

“Alpha King.”

“I see them.”

Clau

Two wolves stood on the rocks above us. They made no attempt to hide anymore. Both were in wolf form and watched the vehicles pass beneath them. Neither came down.

Isla looked up.

“Silvermere?”

“Most likely.”

“Should we stop?”

“No.”

If they wanted us to stop, they would make that clear. Until then, I wasn’t turning our arrival into a confrontation. We had come openly.

The passage ended several minutes later. The mountains opened into a wide valley filled with trees and fields. A river crossed through the center before disappearing farther north. In the distance, buildings came into view.

Silvermere.

Isla stared ahead.

“It’s real.”

“It is.”

“After everything we read, I still wondered.”

“So did I.”

The road continued toward the valley. More wolves appeared as we drove farther in. Some remained in wolf form near the trees while others stood beside the road. Nobody approached us.

Zeron’s voice entered my mind.

‘We’re surrounded.’

‘I know.’

‘Orders?’

hicles unless I stop.’

veral wolves near the river. Their attention had moved away from the vehicles. Most g her. Then one lowered his head.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 257

Into the north

(Isla)

I woke before the sun had fully risen. For a moment I stayed beside Caius and listened to the quiet around us. Then I remembered where we were going. Sleep left me at once.

Caius opened his eyes not long after. He looked at me, then toward the bags we’d packed the night before. Neither of us needed to say what was on our minds. Today we were leaving Wraithbone.

“Did you sleep?” he asked.

“Some.”

“That’s not an answer.”

“It is the only one you’re getting.”

He smiled and got out of bed. I followed, already feeling Vaela awake inside me. She had been restless through the night, though she hadn’t bothered me with questions. I knew she was thinking about the same things I was.

‘We’re going north,’ she said.

‘We are.’

‘Maybe we’ll find them.

‘Maybe.

I didn’t have to ask who she meant. My mother and father had become questions neither of us could ignore. We knew three letters from my mother’s name and nothing about my father. That could change before we returned.

Caius and I dressed and checked our bags again. He carried both toward the door before I could reach for mine. I gave him a look, but he ignored it. Some habits weren’t worth arguing about.

“You know I can carry that.”

“I know.”

“Then give it to me.”

“No.”

I laughed.

We left our quarters and walked through the pack house together. The pack was beginning to wake, though most wolves had no idea why we were leaving so early. A few greeted us as we passed. Caius answered each one without stopping.

Zeron and Raith were already waiting near the entrance. Four Wraithbone warriors stood with them, each carrying enough supplies for the journey. Two vehicles waited outside. Everything Caius had ordered the day before had been done.

“You know me?”

The man looked at her

“I know what you are.”

“That’s what I asked.”

“No him carefully.

ur name?”

ou the Alpha of Silvermere?”

shook his head.

We don’t have an Alpha.”

That wasn’t what I’d expected.

Then who leads this territory?”

The Keeper.”

“Take us to them.”

Orin looked at Isla again.

“The Keeper already knows you’re here.”

Isla watched him.

“How?”

He didn’t answer.

Instead, Orin lowered his head to her.

“Welcome to Silvermere, Celestial Queen.”

The wolves beside him disk

Isla looked at

I took he

“We

Chairs

“About my parents.”

Something changed in Orin’s face.

Isla saw it too.

“You know something.”

“What I know isn’t mine to tell.”

“Whose is it?”

“The Keeper’s.”

I looked toward the buildings, behind him.

“Then take us to the Keeper.”

Orin nodded.

“Follow me.”

Cherry

He turned toward the center of Silvermere. Isla and I followed with Zeron and Raith behind us. Wolves stopped to watch Isla as we passed.

They knew exactly what she was.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 258

The names offmy parents

The names of my parents

(Isla)

Clari

Orin led us through Silvermere while Caius kept hold of my hand. Zeron and Raith came with us as we passed wolves standing outside their homes. I tried not to stare back, but

marry of them seemed to know something about me. Vaela watched them through my eyes.

‘They know us,’ she said.

‘Or they know what we are.

‘There is a difference.’

‘We’re about to find out.’

The buildings became larger as we reached the center of the territory. Children played near one of the homes while several older wolves stopped talking when they saw us. Every wolf we passed lowered their head to me. None of them did the same for Caius.

Orin stopped in front of a large stone building near the river. Two wolves stood outside, but both moved aside when they saw him approaching. He looked at me before reaching for the door. “The Keeper has waited a long time for this day.”

“For me?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“How long?”

“She should answer that.”

He opened the door and allowed us to enter ahead of him. Shelves filled with books and records covered two walls. A large table stood near the center of the building. An older woman stood at the other end.

She turned toward us.

Her eyes found me before anyone else. She studied my face without saying anything. Then she walked toward me.

“Isla Thorne.”

I stopped.

“You know my name?”

“I do.”

“How?”

She looked at me again.

“Because we’ve been waiting for you.”

Into the north

“So we found the road.”

Looks like it.”

Vaela moved inside me.

I stopped.

Caius noticed immediately.

“What?”

I didn’t answer him at once.

Something had ch

It wasn’t fear

It wasn’t

It felt said.

n here?’

oming from Vaela.

er came without hesitation.

what is it?’

ela became quiet.

ooked toward the path again.

Trees covered most of what waited ahead. The road curved out of sight before reaching the mountains. There was no way to know how far Silvermere remained.

‘Vaela?’

She finally answered.

‘Someone knows

I looked at

“We’re

Vale

The names of thy parents “You knew them?”

Elara nodded.

“I know who both of them were.”

Clasex

For a moment I couldn’t think of what to ask first. We had spent so much time searching for pieces of my mother’s name. We had found nothing about my father. Now Elara claimed to know them both.

“My mother’s name begins with Lyr.”

“Lyrienne.”

I stared at her.

“Lyrienne?”

“Lyrienne Vale.”

Vaela repeated the name inside me.

‘Our mother.’

I looked at Caius. He was watching me, waiting for whatever I needed from him. I turned back to Elara.

“And my father?”

Elara walked to one of the shelves. She removed a wooden box and brought in to the table. After opening it, she took out a folded parchment. She placed it in front of me.

Two names were written near the top.

The first was Lyrienne Vale. Beneath it was another name I had never seen before. I read it twice before looking at Elara.

“Darius Rowan.”

“Your father.”

“Who was he?”

“A wolf of Silvermere.”

Mooked down at his name.

now about me?”

Existed?”

at answer brought another question immediately. If Darius had known about me. I needed to Understand why he’d never found me. The same question remained about Lyrienne. I looked at Elara

Welcome to Stivermere

“Yes.”

Raith glanced toward the vehicles.

“We keep going?”

“We do.”

I folded Cael’s map and returned it to Zeron. There was no reason to remain here waiting for hidden wolves to show themselves. They knew we’d found the road. We needed to see where it led.

We returned to the vehicles. Isla climbed into the passenger seat beside me while the two warriors got into the back. Zeron and Raith returned to the vehicle behind us. I started the engine and turned onto the narrow path.

Trees grew close on both sides of the road. The path had clearly been used, though not enough to make it look like a normal route. Tire marks crossed the dirt in several places. Someone had also cut back branches that would have blocked vehicles.

“They use this road,” Isla said.

“They do.”

“So Silvermere isn’t completely separated from everything outside.”

“No.”

That told me something important. The wolves of Silvermere weren’t trapped beyond the mountains. They could leave whenever they wanted. Remaining hidden had been a choice.

The path began climbing. The trees opened enough for us to see the mountains ahead. We had traveled beyond anything on Pryor’s current maps. From here, Cael’s map was all we had.

“How much farther?” Isla asked.

I glanced at the map.

“If the distance is accurate, not long.”

“Do you trust it?”

“I trust that Cael had a reason to hide it.”

She looked at me.

“That’s not the same thing.”

“No.”

We continued until the path narrowed between two high walls of rock. There was enough space for one vehicle at a time. I checked the mirror and saw Zeron following behind us. There was nowhere to turn ind the warriors behind me spoke.

The journey-affead returned. Maybe I’d finally know the names of both wolves who had given me life.

Caius came beside me.

“Nervous?”

“A little.”

“About what?”

I thought about the question.

“Finding out som

He waited.

“What if

‘t want to know.”

“The est on purpose?”

did it.”

er we learn about my parents?”

with the truth when we have it.”

t was all we could do.

We would cross the northern mountains and travel toward a place that had been hidden from the rest of the wolf world for generations. Somewhere there could be wolves who knew my mother’s full name and the identity of my father.

By morning, we would be on our way.

princess jody

I hope you’re s et me know what you think so far. Ed

“We know where she went.”

“Where?”

“I’ll show you.”

Cars

Elara reached into the box again. She removed another record and placed it beside the others. I wanted to read it immediately, but another question had been waiting since the moment she gave me his name. I needed the answer just as much.

“And my father?”

“We know what happened to him too.”

“Is he alive?”

Elara looked at me.

“I have an answer for that.”

I stared at her.

“And my mother?”

“For that as well.”

Caius took my hand again. I looked down at the names of the two wolves who had given me life. Lyrienne Vale and Darius Rowan were no longer nameless wolves from a past I couldn’t remember.

They had known I existed.

They had wanted me protected.

And they had believed I was dead.

She never stopped searching

(Isla)

Clason

I looked at Elara and waited for the answer. She had already given me my father’s name, something I hadn’t expected to learn so soon after arriving in Silvermere. Now I needed to know what had happened to him. I needed to know what had happened to my mother too.

Elara looked down at the record.

“I’ll start with your father.”

“Is he alive?”

“No.”

The answer hurt more than I expected. I had only known Darius Rowan’s name for a few minutes, yet some part of me had already wondered what it would be like to meet him. Vaela became quiet inside me. I kept my eyes on Elara.

“How did he die?”

“He remained in Silvermere after you disappeared.”

“For how long?”

“Many years.”

Elara opened the record in front of her. Darius had helped search for me after I vanished, even after Cael sent word that I was dead. He refused to accept the message without proof. No proof ever came.

“He kept looking?” I asked.

“For years.”

“Even after Cael told him I was dead?”

“Yes.”

I looked down at his name. Darius hadn’t forgotten me or chosen to leave me behind. He had searched until there was nowhere else he knew to look. I wished I could have known him.

“What happened to him?”

“He eventually returned to Silvermere.”

“And he stayed here?”

“Until his death.”

“Did he ever believe I was dead?”

Elara considered the question before answering. “I don’t think he ever completely accepted it.” She touched the record with one finger. “According to the Keeper before me, Darius always believed there was

“You and Pryor have authority over daily matters until I return.”

She nodded.

“It will be done.”

There was no long farewell. Caius wasn’t leaving his kingdom for months. We were going north to find answers and returning when we had them. Still, looking back at the pack house before getting into the vehicle felt different.

I climbed into the passenger seat beside Caius. There had been a time when I hadn’t even known what to do when faced with one of these vehicles. Now I got in without giving it another thought. So much of my life had changed since th

The gates opened.

I looked through arrived there b

Now I was we drove out. Wraithbone disappeared behind us little by little. I had d already been decided by everything Ashcrest had done to me.

at came before it.

ed Vaela.

‘Do you

‘Not re.”

n?’

keep going.’

or me.

urs passed without trouble. Roads Irecognized became roads I’d never traveled before. cker as we moved farther north. The temperature outside dropped as the land began to rough the window.

etting closer.”

ow much farther?”

A few hours before we reach the mountains.”

I nodded and looked through the window again.

The mountains becanic from the one we we centuries ago. T

We stopped

Pryor’s r rose ahead of us, separating the territories I knew them was a hidden pack that had expected me me over with the map while Caius spread beside them and studied the mountains

She never stepped-searching

“Where is she?”

“That answer is more difficult.”

“You said you know where she went.”

“I do.”

I waited.

Elara opened another record.

“Lyrienne left Silvermere before word came that you were dead.”

“Because she was searching for me.”

“Yes.”

“Where did she search?”

“Every territory where anyone reported seeing a child who could have been you.”

My mother had been searching while I was being raised in Ashcrest. I tried to imagine how close she might have come without knowing it. Someone had hidden me well enough that even a Celestial couldn’t find me. That couldn’t have happened by accident.

“Did she ever search Ashcrest?”

“Not that we know.”

“Why?”

“Because every record connected to your disappearance pointed elsewhere.”

Caius looked at Elara.

“Someone sent her in the wrong direction.”

“Yes.”

“On purpose?”

“That is what we believe.”

I looked down at the documents. Whoever had taken me hadn’t simply placed me with Derek and Helene They had made sure the wolves searching for me looked somewhere else. My mother could have spent years following information created to keep her away from me.

“Where did the false trail lead?”

“South at first.”

“And after that?”

“Across several territories.”

Vaela moved inside me.

Clair

Caius didn’t interrupt. He knew I needed to hear whatever this woman had to say. Orin remained near the door.

The woman looked toward him.

“You may leave us.”

Orin lowered his head.

“Keeper.”

He left and closed the door.

The woman turned toward us again. “My name is Elara, and I am the Keeper of Silvermere.” She walked toward the table and gestured for us to join her. “My family has protected this territory’s history for generations.”

I remained standing.

“What does that have to do with me?”

“More than you know.”

“Then tell me.”

Elara looked at Caius.

“Your ancestors protected pieces of the same history.

“The journals,” he said.

“Yes.”

“You know about them?”

“We know why they were written.”

I looked between them. Everything we'd discovered in Wraithbone had led us here. The divided circle, the birth record, and the hidden map were all connected to Silvermere. Elara seemed to know how.

"You knew a Celestial child was supposed to come here," I said.

"We did."

"Why?"

"Because her parents wanted her protected."

I took a step closer.

"My parents?"

"Yes."

Welcome to Stivermere

Welcome to Silvermere

(Caius)

I looked toward the path Isla had been watching. Nothing moved between the trees, but I trusted her and Vaela enough not to question what she felt. Zeron and Raith turned their attention toward the woods.

"Where?" I asked.

Isla shook her head.

"Vaela doesn't know."

"But she feels someone?"

"Yes"

I looked at the four warriors. They understood and began watching the land around us. I didn't want anyone going into the trees after wolves we couldn't see. Whoever lived here knew this land better than we did.

"Nobody leaves the road," I said.

Zeron looked toward the trees.

“You think they’re watching us?”

“I would be.”

Raith nodded.

“If strangers found Wraithbone through a hidden road, we’d watch them too.”

That was exactly what I was thinking. We had entered land that had been kept away from the rest of the wolf world for generations. Whoever lived here had every reason to wonder how we’d found them. I wanted them to see we weren’t hiding our arrival.

‘Anything?’ I asked Vorak.

‘Wolves’

‘How many?’

‘I cannot tell.’

That confirmed Vaela was right. I looked farther into the trees but saw nothing. Whoever watched us knew how to remain out of sight. They had probably known we were coming before we stopped.

“There are wolves out there,” I said.

Zeren looked at me.

“Vorak?”

She never stepped cearching We have to find her.

“We will.

I looked at Caius.

He didn’t need me to explain.

“We’ll go,” he said.

I turned back to Elara.

“Tell me where my mother is.”

The names effry parents

He used several names.”

“Caius looked over the record.

“And every one was false?

“That is what we believe.”

I looked at Elara.

“Was he the one who took me?”

“We believe he arranged it.”

“Why?”

“We don’t know yet.”

Chasin

I hated hearing those words. Still, this was already more than we’d known before coming here. My parents had wanted me. They had known about me.

“What happened after I disappeared?”

“Wolves from Silvermere searched for you.”

“For how long?”

“Until Cael sent word that you were dead.”

I looked at the names again.

“Where were my parents?”

“Your father was here when the message arrived.”

“And my mother?”

“She had already left Silvermere.”

“Why?”

Elara looked at me.

“She was searching for you.”

I stared at her.

“She looked for me?”

“For years”

Vaela became quiet.

I looked down at Lyrienne’s name. For years I had believed Derek and Helene were my parents because ! had known nothing else. Now I was learning that my real mother had been searching for me while I was growing up in Ashcrest.

Welcome to Bffvermere

“4-saw”

Another wolf did the same.

Then another.

Nobody had announced who Ista was. Yet the wolves of Silvermere were responding to her as though they’d been expecting a Celestial Queen to arrive. Vorak had noticed it too.

ey recognize her.’

now.’

a looked at me.

Why are they bowing?”

“We’re going to find out.”

The road led toward the largest group of buildings. Homes stood throughout the valley, along with several larger structures near the river. Wolves moved between them as they would in any living pack. Silvermere had never been abandoned.

I slowed when five wolves stepped into the road ahead. None carried weapons that I could see. The man standing in the center looked older than the others. His eyes went directly to Isla.

I stopped the vehicle.

Zeron stopped behind us.

“Stay here,” I told the warriors.

Isla opened her door.

“I’m coming with you.”

“I know.”

We got out together. Zeron and Raith joined us while the warriors remained near the vehicles. The older wolf watched me approach. Then he looked at Isla again.

Recognition crossed his face.

The wolves beside hi speaking

“Al acted too. Orie woman covered her mouth. Another stared at Isla without sla.

sted you to bring her here.”

Pryor stood beside Zeron with several documents in his hands. Lira was there too, watching the preparations without getting in anyone’s way. She looked at me when we approached. Her expression told me she already knew this journey mattered.

“Everything is ready, Zeron said.

Caius nodded.

“And Cael?”

“On his way here under guard.”

“Good.”

Pryor handed Caius the d

“These are the routes orthern mountains that are still in use.”

“Anything about t

“Very little.”

That didn’t

Every har ore.

r information about Silvermere, we found more proof that someone had worked mon records. The place hadn’t vanished because wolves forgot it. It had been e who didn’t need

to know. I wondered how many generations had helped protect a King Caius won’t let anything happen to you.”

anything happen to him either.”

arned a smile from her.

s looked toward me when he heard the last part. I could tell he wanted to say something. He decided ainst it. That was probably the wiser choice.

ryor turned to Caius.

Wraithbone will be handled

I know.”

f anything char o that.”

ely”

She never stopped searching a chance you had survived.”

I closed my eyes for a moment. My father had died without ever learning that he had been right. I had been alive while he waited for an answer that never came. Ashcrest had taken more from me than I had understood.

‘He wanted us,’ Vaela said.

‘Yes.’

‘He looked for s

‘He did.

I open again.

ou came to Wraithbone.”

e any other children?”

swer left me with another feeling I couldn’t name. Darius had known he had a daughter where, even when everyone told him she was gone. I wondered what kind of father he would have if I’d reached Silvermere as planned. That was something no record could answer.

oked at Elara.

And my mother?”

Lyrienne’s story is different.”

“Is she alive?”

“Yes.”

I stared at her.

For several seconds I couldn’t speak. Vaela reacted before I did, moving inside me with enough force that

I felt her need for answers. Caius closed his hand around mine.

“You’re certain?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Because

I alrea san rdinary wolves. Three hundred years didn’t mean the hearing that my mother was alive made everything world, Lyrienne Vale was stiv diving.

Into the north

The main road continues for another two hours Zeron said.

And after that?” I asked.

t splits.”

aius pointed to one route:

This road takes us toward the eardrthern pasks Pryor knows.”

And this one?” Raith asked.d t doesn’t appear on the curterem maps.”

looked closer.

faded road had beened drawn across Cael’s map. It passed between two mountains before dissapearing ear the mark for Silvevererere. Whoever created it had expected someone to know how to failawitt.

That’s our road, sasaid.

aius looked at amme.

sostomo foldeteth the newer map.

Therewevfllow Cael’s.”

obory disagreed.

re/atate quickly before getting back into the vehicles. This time I paid more attention to everything outside. hierere were no houses as we traveled farther north. Even signs marking pack boodless became less rammon.

Several hours later, Caius slowed the vehicle.

“What is it?” I asked.

“The road.”

blooked ahead.

The main route continued to the right, exactly as Pryor’s records showed. To the left was something might have missed if Caius hadn’t been looking for it. A narrowpath disappeared between the trees.

Zeron’s vehicle stopped behind us.

Calus eron and Raith joined us the entrance to the path. No sign marked

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 259

The names of my parents

The names of my parents

(Isla)

Orin led us through Silvermere while Caius kept hold of my hand. Zeron and Raith came with us as we passed wolves standing outside their homes. I tried not to stare back, but many of them seemed to know something about me. Vaela watched them through my eyes.

‘They know us,’ she said.

‘Or they know what we are.’

‘There is a difference.’

‘We’re about to find out.’

The buildings became larger as we reached the center of the territory. Children played near one of the homes while several older wolves stopped talking when they saw us. Every wolf we passed lowered their head to me. None of them did the same for Caius.

Orin stopped in front of a large stone building near the river. Two wolves stood outside, but both moved aside when they saw him approaching. He looked at me before reaching for the door. “The Keeper has waited a long time for this day.”

“For me?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“How long?”

“She should answer that.”

He opened the door and allowed us to enter ahead of him. Shelves filled with books and records covered two walls. A large table stood near the center of the building. An older woman stood at the other end.

She turned toward us.

Her eyes found me before anyone else. She studied my face without saying anything. Then she walked toward me.

“Isla Thorne.”

I stopped.

“You know my name?”

The names of my parents

“I do.”

“How?”

She looked at me again.

“Because we’ve been waiting for you.”

Vaela moved inside me.

Caius didn’t interrupt. He knew I needed to hear whatever this woman had to say. Orin remained near the door.

The woman looked toward him.

“You may leave us.”

Orin lowered his head.

“Keeper.”

He left and closed the door.

The woman turned toward us again. “My name is Elara, and I am the Keeper of Silvermere.” She walked toward the table and gestured for us to join her. “My family has protected this territory’s history for generations.”

I remained standing.

“What does that have to do with me?”

“More than you know.”

“Then tell me.”

Elara looked at Caius.

“Your ancestors protected pieces of the same history.”

“The journals,” he said.

“Yes.”

“You know about them?”

“We know why they were written.”

I looked between them. Everything we’d discovered in Wraithbone had led us here. The

The names of my parents divided circle, the birth record, and the hidden map were all connected to Silvermere Elara seemed to know how.

“You knew a Celestial child was supposed to come here,” I said.

“We did.”

“Why?”

“Because her parents wanted her protected.”

I took a step closer.

“My parents?”

“Yes.”

“You knew them?”

Elara nodded.

“I know who both of them were.”

For a moment I couldn’t think of what to ask first. We had spent so much time searching for pieces of my mother’s name. We had found nothing about my father. Now Elara claimed to know them both.

“My mother’s name begins with Lyr.”

“Lyrienne.”

I stared at her.

“Lyrienne?”

“Lyrienne Vale.”

Vaela repeated the name inside me.

‘Our mother.’

I looked at Caius. He was watching me, waiting for whatever I needed from him. I turned back to Elara.

“And my father?”

Elara walked to one of the shelves. She removed a wooden box and brought it to the table. After opening it, she took out a folded parchment. She placed it in front of me.

The names of my parents

Two names were written near the top.

+25 Poima.

The first was Lyrienne Vale. Beneath it was another name I had never seen before. I read it twice before looking at Elara.

“Darius Rowan.”

“Your father.”

“Who was he?”

“A wolf of Silvermere.”

I looked down at his name.

“Did he know about me?”

“Yes.”

“He knew I existed?”

“He did.”

That answer brought another question immediately. If Darius had known about me, I needed to understand why he’d never found me. The same question remained about Lyrienne. I looked at Elara.

“Why didn’t they come for me?”

“They believed you were dead.”

“Both of them?”

“Yes.”

“Who told them?”

Elara looked at the parchment.

“Cael.”

Caius spoke.

“Cael told them Isla was dead?”

“According to our records.”

“Why?”

The names of my parents

“Because that was what he had been told.”

I thought about the healer Zeron had captured. Cael had known about Silvermere and kept the map hidden for years. He had refused to tell Zeron everything. Now I understood how far back his connection went.

“Was Cael supposed to bring me here?” I asked.

“No.”

“Then who was?”

“That is where our records become uncertain.”

I frowned.

“I don’t want another mystery.”

“I understand.”

“Then tell me what you know.”

“I will.”

Elara took another document from the box. She opened it on the table beside the first one. Several names had been written across the page. One had been marked beside the date of my disappearance.

“Someone learned about the plan to bring you here,” Elara said.

“Who?”

“We don’t know his real name.”

“What do you know?”

“He used several names.”

Caius looked over the record.

“And every one was false?”

“That is what we believe.”

I looked at Elara.

“Was he the one who took me?”

The names of my parents

“We believe he arranged it.”

“Why?”

“We don’t know yet.”

I hated hearing those words. Still, this was already more than we’d known before coming here. My parents had wanted me. They had known about me.

“What happened after I disappeared?”

“Wolves from Silvermere searched for you.”

“For how long?”

“Until Cael sent word that you were dead.”

I looked at the names again.

“Where were my parents?”

“Your father was here when the message arrived.”

“And my mother?”

“She had already left Silvermere.”

“Why?”

Elara looked at me.

“She was searching for you.”

I stared at her.

“She looked for me?”

“For years.”

Vaela became quiet.

I looked down at Lyrienne’s name. For years I had believed Derek and Helene were my parents because I had known nothing else. Now I was learning that my real mother had been searching for me while I was growing up in Ashcrest.

“What happened to her?”

“We know where she went.”

The names of my parents

“Where?”

“I’ll show you.”

425 Paint

Elara reached into the box again. She removed another record and placed it beside the others. I wanted to read it immediately, but another question had been waiting since the moment she gave me his name. I needed the answer just as much.

“And my father?”

“We know what happened to him too.”

“Is he alive?”

Elara looked at me.

“I have an answer for that.”

I stared at her.

“And my mother?”

“For that as well.”

Caius took my hand again. I looked down at the names of the two wolves who had given me life. Lyrienne Vale and Darius Rowan were no longer nameless wolves from a past I couldn’t remember.

They had known I existed.

They had wanted me protected.

And they had believed I was dead.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 260

She never stopped searching

Clint’s

She never stopped searching

(Isla)

I looked at Elara and waited for the answer. She had already given me my father’s name, something I hadn’t expected to learn so soon after arriving in Silvermere. Now I needed to know what had happened to him. I needed to know what had happened to my mother too.

Elara looked down at the record.

“I’ll start with your father.”

“Is he alive?”

“No.”

The answer hurt more than I expected. I had only known Darius Rowan’s name for a few minutes, yet some part of me had already wondered what it would be like to meet him. Vaela became quiet inside me. I kept my eyes on Elara.

“How did he die?”

“He remained in Silvermere after you disappeared.”

“For how long?”

“Many years.”

Elara opened the record in front of her. Darius had helped search for me after I vanished, even after Cael sent word that I was dead. He refused to accept the message without proof. No proof ever came.

“He kept looking?” I asked.

“For years.”

“Even after Cael told him I was dead?”

“Yes.”

I looked down at his name. Darius hadn’t forgotten me or chosen to leave me behind. He had searched until there was nowhere else he knew to look. I wished I could have known him.

“What happened to him?”

“He eventually returned to Silvermere.”

She never stopped searchany

“And he stayed here?”

“Until his death.”

“Did he ever believe I was dead?”

Elara considered the question before answering. “I don’t think he ever completely accepted it.” She touched the record with one finger. “According to the Keeper before me, Darius alway believed there was a chance you had survived.”

I closed my eyes for a moment. My father had died without ever learning that he had been right. I had been alive while he waited for an answer that never came. Ashcrest had taken more from me than I had understood.

‘He wanted us, Vaela said.

‘Yes.’

‘He looked for us.’

‘He did.’

I opened my eyes again.

“When did he die?”

“Long before you came to Wraithbone.”

“Did he have any other children?”

“No.”

That answer left me with another feeling I couldn’t name. Darius had known he had a daughter somewhere, even when everyone told him she was gone. I wondered what kind of father he would have been if I’d reached Silvermere as planned. That was something no record could answer.

I looked at Elara.

“And my mother?”

“Lyrienne’s story is different.”

“Is she alive?”

“Yes.”

I stared at her.

ClanD

She never stopped searching

For several seconds I couldn’t speak. Vaela reacted before I did, moving inside me with enough force that I felt her need for answers. Caius closed his hand around mine.

“You’re certain?” I asked.

“Yes.”

“How?”

“Because Lyrienne is a Celestial.”

I already knew Celestials could live far longer than ordinary wolves. Three hundred years didn’t mean the same thing for her that it would for most wolves. Still, hearing that my mother was alive made everything else disappear from my thoughts. Somewhere in the world, Lyrienne Vale was still living.

“Where is she?”

“That answer is more difficult.”

“You said you know where she went.”

“I do.”

I waited.

Elara opened another record.

“Lyrienne left Silvermere before word came that you were dead.”

“Because she was searching for me.”

“Yes.”

“Where did she search?”

“Every territory where anyone reported seeing a child who could have been you.”

My mother had been searching while I was being raised in Ashcrest. I tried to imagine how close she might have come without knowing it. Someone had hidden me well enough that even a Celestial couldn’t find me. That couldn’t have happened by accident.

“Did she ever search Ashcrest?”

“Not that we know.”

“Why?”

She never stopped searching

“Because every record connected to your disappearance pointed elsewhere.”

Caius looked at Elara.

“Someone sent her in the wrong direction.”

“Yes.”

“On purpose?”

“That is what we believe.”

I looked down at the documents. Whoever had taken me hadn’t simply placed me with Derek and Helene. They had made sure the wolves searching for me looked somewhere

else. My mother could have spent years following information created to keep her away from me.

“Where did the false trail lead?”

“South at first.”

“And after that?”

“Across several territories.”

“How long did she follow it?”

“Years.”

I thought about my life in Ashcrest. I had grown up believing Derek and Helene were my parents. Somewhere beyond that pack, my real mother had been searching for the daughter she thought had been taken from her. Neither of us had known how close or far apart we were.

“What happened when she stopped searching those territories?”

“She came back here.”

My eyes went to Elara.

“She returned to Silvermere?”

“Yes.”

“Was my father still alive?”

“He was.”

That hurt in a different way. For some time, my parents had both been here after losing me.

She never stopped searching

They had shared the same questions while I lived somewhere else under another family’s name. I wondered how many nights they’d talked about where I might be.

“Did they stay together?”

“Yes.”

“Until he died?”

“Yes.”

“And then she left again?”

Elara nodded.

I looked at Caius.

“Where did she go?”

Elara reached for the final record she’d removed from the box. She turned it toward me, revealing a map drawn across the parchment. One location had been circled near the far northern border. It was beyond Silvermere.

“She went farther north,” Elara said.

“Why?”

“She received information that you might have survived.”

My attention returned to her.

“When?”

“After Darius died.”

“Who gave her the information?”

“We don’t know.”

I almost asked another question, but stopped myself. The answer mattered less than what Lyrienne had done with it. If she had believed there was even a chance I survived, I already knew what she would have done. She would have started searching again.

“She went after it.”

“Immediately.”

“Did she find anything?”

She never stopped searching

“We don’t know.”

I looked at the map.

“Why not?”

“She never returned to Silvermere.”

My eyes went back to Elara.

“But you know she’s alive.”

“We do.”

“Then you’ve heard from her.”

“Yes.”

Cham

That was the answer I needed. Lyrienne wasn’t simply assumed to be alive because she was a Celestial. Silvermere had received something from her. My mother had survived whatever she’d found beyond these mountains.

“When was the last message?”

“Several years ago.”

“What did it say?”

Elara looked at me.

“That she was still searching.”

I couldn’t look away from her. Three hundred years had passed, and my mother had never completely given up. She had lost Darius and still continued. She had spent centuries looking for a daughter who had been alive all along.

‘She never stopped,’ Vaela said.

‘No.’

‘We have to find her.’

‘We will.’

I looked at Caius.

He didn’t need me to explain.

She never stopped searching

“We’ll go,” he said.

I turned back to Elara.

“Tell me where my mother is.”

The place chosen for me

The place chosen for me

(Isla)

Glavn

Elara looked at the map between us. “I will give you the last place we know she went.” She placed her hand beside the mark farther north. “But there is something you need to understand before you go after her.”

“What?”

“Why you were supposed to come to Silvermere.”

I looked at Caius before turning back to her. That question had followed us all the way here. We knew my parents had chosen this place for me, but not why. I wanted the answer before we went any farther.

Elara closed the box and walked toward one of the shelves. She returned with a book and placed it on the table. The divided circle was carved into the cover. I recognized it immediately.

“The symbol.”

“Yes.”

“What does it mean?”

“Protection.”

I looked at the divided circle again. We had found it in the journals, on my birth record, and on the map Cael had hidden. Every time it appeared, it had been connected to my past. Now I finally knew why.

“Silvermere has protected Celestials for generations,” Elara said. “Not every Celestial came here, but those who needed protection could be brought here.” She opened the book and turned several pages. “Only a small number of wolves outside this territory knew that.”

Caius looked at the names written inside.

“My ancestors.”

“Some of them.”

“That’s why they had the symbol in their records.”

“Yes.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 261

The place chosen for me

Clem

I moved closer to the table. Several Alpha Kings were listed among the names, along with healers and wolves from territories I didn’t recognize. They had all known what the divided circle meant. It had never been meant for everyone to understand.

“Why would a Celestial need to hide?” I asked.

“Because being powerful doesn’t make someone impossible to hurt.”

I thought about the wolfsbane chains in Ashcrest.

I knew that better than anyone.

Elara continued. “Celestial children needed time to understand what they were.” She turned another page and pointed to several names. “Silvermere provided somewhere they could grow without other packs trying to control them.”

“And my mother wanted that for me?”

“Both of your parents did.”

I looked at Darius’s name again.

“What were they afraid of?”

“Someone had already learned Lyrienne was carrying a Celestial.”

Caius looked at Elara.

“Before Isla was born?”

“Yes.”

“How?”

“We never discovered that.”

I didn’t like that answer, but I didn’t interrupt. Elara had already given us more than the journals had. Whoever had learned about me had done so before I could protect myself. My parents had known there was danger before I was born.

“What did they do?” I asked.

“They contacted Silvermere.”

“And you agreed to take me?”

“Immediately.”

Clan

The place chosen for me

“Why?”

“Because that is what this territory was created to do.”

Elara turned another page. My mother’s name appeared beside my father’s, followed by a date. Beneath their names was the divided circle. I reached toward it but stopped before touching the page.

“This was arranged before I was born.”

“Yes.”

“Who knew?”

“Very few wolves.”

Caius looked at her.

“How few?”

“Your parents, the Keeper at the time, two wolves chosen to bring Isla here, and several others needed to protect the journey.”

“Cael?”

“He knew part of it.”

I looked at her.

“But he wasn’t supposed to bring me.”

“No.”

“Then what was his part?”

“He was supposed to help hide the records after you arrived.”

That explained why Cael had known about the map. He hadn’t been responsible for getting me to Silvermere. His job had begun after I was supposed to be safe.

“But I never arrived.”

“No.”

Elara closed the book.

“Someone learned enough about the plan to stop it.”

The place chosen for me

“Before my parents could bring me here?”

“Yes.”

I thought about Derek and Helene.

“How did I end up in Ashcrest?”

“We have part of that answer.”

I looked at her.

“Tell me.”

Clatro

Elara returned to the wooden box and removed another page. Unlike the older records, this one contained only a few lines. She placed it in front of me.

“A message reached Silvermere after you disappeared.”

“From who?”

“We don’t know.”

I read the first line.

The child has been placed where no one will search.

My eyes moved to the next.

Her name will be changed. Her blood will remain hidden.

I looked at Caius.

“They knew exactly what they were doing.”

“Yes.”

Elara nodded.

“Your disappearance wasn’t an accident.”

I looked back at the message. Someone had taken me knowing exactly what I was. They had changed my life before I was old enough to understand any of it. Ashcrest hadn’t been some random place where I’d ended up.

“Derek and Helene knew?”

“We don’t believe they knew everything.”

Clases

The place chosen for me

“What did they know?”

“They were told a child needed a family.”

I stared at her.

“That’s it?”

“According to what we found.”

Caius looked at the message.

“Who gave Isla to them?”

“That name isn’t here.”

“So Cael might know.”

“He might.”

That gave us another reason to question him ourselves. Cael had spent years protecting names and hiding records. Whatever loyalty kept him quiet had already cost Isla enough. I wasn’t allowing it to continue.

I looked at Elara.

“Did Derek know I was Celestial?”

“Not when you were placed with him.”

That made sense with what I remembered. Derek had treated me as though I was nothing once I appeared wolfless. If he’d known what I truly was from the beginning, he would have treated my existence differently.

“When did he find out?”

“We don’t know.”

I looked at Caius.

“Cael might.”

“He’ll answer that when we return.”

I nodded.

Elara reached for the map again. This time she turned it so I could see the land beyond Silvermere. Her finger stopped at the location she’d shown me earlier. A name had been

The place chosen for me written beside it.

“Your mother went here.”

I read the name.

“Evercrest.”

“It lies beyond the northern ridge.”

“Is that where her last message came from?”

“Yes.”

Clams

I looked at the distance between Silvermere and Evercrest. It was farther north, but not impossibly far. My mother had gone there searching for me. Years later, she’d sent word that she was still looking.

“Is she still there?”

“I can’t promise you that.”

“But that’s where we start.”

“Yes.”

I looked at Caius.

“We’re going.”

“We are.”

Elara closed the book and returned it to the shelf. I looked around the building differently now. Silvermere wasn’t simply where I had been meant to grow up. It had been chosen to protect me from the wolves who already knew I existed.

My parents had made that choice together.

They had tried to give me somewhere safe.

Someone else had taken that choice from all of us.

Elara returned to the table.

“There is one more record you should see before you leave Silvermere.”

I looked at her.

The place chosen for me

“About what?”

“The day you disappeared.”

Caius turned toward her.

“You have a record from that day?”

“Yes.”

“Why didn’t you show us before?”

“Because I needed Isla to understand why she was being brought here first.”

I looked at the wooden box.

“Does it say who took me?”

“Not by name.

I was tired of names being missing.

“What does it say?”

Elara met my eyes.

“It tells us who saw you last.”

I looked at Caius.

That changed everything.

“Show me.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 262

The wolf who took me

(Isla)

Chaire

Elara reached into the wooden box and removed a folded piece of parchment. She opened it with care and placed it in front of me. Writing covered most of the page, with a date across the top. It was the same date recorded beside my disappearance.

“Who wrote this?”

Elara pointed toward the bottom of the page. A name had been written there that I didn’t recognize. I leaned closer to read it. Mara Voss.

“Who was she?” Caius asked.

Elara looked at the record before answering him. Mara had been one of the two wolves chosen to bring me to Silvermere. She knew about the divided circle and why I needed protection. My parents had trusted her.

“Then she saw me?”

“Yes.”

“That day?”

“She was there.”

I looked down at the first line. Mara had met my parents at a small settlement south of Silvermere. Darius had been there with Lyrienne and me. Another wolf was supposed to meet them before the journey north.

“Who was the second wolf?”

“Corvin Rell.”

The name meant nothing to me. There were too many wolves connected to my past that I had never known existed. I looked at Elara again. “Was he from Silvermere?”

“Yes.”

“Did my parents trust him?”

“They did.”

“Then what happened?”

The wolf who took me

Glan

Elara opened the book she'd shown us earlier and found Corvin's name. He had served Silvermere for eleven years before I was born. His name appeared beside the divided circle more than once. Nothing suggested anyone had questioned his loyalty.

"Did he meet them?"

"No."

I looked at her.

Corvin had been expected at the settlement before they began the journey north. Mara waited while my parents remained with me. After enough time passed, Darius refused to continue. He wanted to know what had happened to Corvin first.

"And my mother agreed?"

"Yes."

"Because they already knew someone wanted me?"

"Exactly."

I looked at their names again. My parents hadn't been willing to risk taking me farther without knowing why Corvin was missing. They had chosen to wait. That decision should have kept me with them.

"What did Mara do?"

"She went looking for Corvin."

"And when she came back?"

"You were gone."

I stared at her.

Elara removed another record from the box and placed it beside Mara's account. Darius had been found injured outside the settlement. Lyrienne had been found several miles away. I already knew what happened next.

"And me?"

“You were gone.”

Vaela moved inside me. My parents had been trying to get me somewhere safe when someone came for us. Neither of them had willingly let me go. Someone had taken me from them.

The wolf who took me

‘They tried to protect us, Vaela said.

‘I know.’

‘Someone stopped them.’

‘Yes.’

Caius picked up the second record and read through it. His attention stopped near the middle of the page. He read the same line again before placing the page in front of me. “Darius saw Corvin.”

“He saw him that day?”

“Yes.”

I looked at the record.

Darius had seen Corvin near the settlement shortly before he was attacked. He called out to him, but Corvin disappeared between two buildings. Minutes later, someone attacked Darius. Corvin had been there after all.

“But Mara thought he never arrived.”

“She did,” Elara said.

“Then Corvin was hiding.”

“That is what Darius believed.”

I read the account again. Corvin knew where my parents would be and when they planned to leave. He also knew which route they would take. He had everything someone needed to stop the journey.

“Did my mother see him?”

“Yes.”

Elara placed another page in front of me. Lyrienne's statement described what she remembered from that day. One line stood apart from everything else. She had seen Corvin carrying me.

I stared at the words.

"Corvin took me."

"That is what we believe."

The wolf who took me

"He was the last wolf seen with me?"

"Yes."

I finally had the name of someone directly connected to my disappearance. Corvin hadn't simply known about the plan to bring me here. He had been trusted to help protect me. Instead, my mother had seen him carrying me away.

"What did she do?"

"She followed him."

Lyrienne had chased Corvin away from the settlement. Another wolf attacked her before she could reach him. She fought back before someone struck her from behind. When she woke, Corvin and I were gone.

"Did she see the other wolf?"

"No."

"Anything that could identify him?"

"His face was covered."

I looked at Caius.

"Corvin wasn't alone."

"No."

Elara returned several records to the box. Silvermere had always believed more than one wolf had been involved. Corvin was the only one my parents could identify. Whoever helped him had remained unknown.

“What happened to Corvin?”

“He disappeared that same day.”

“Nobody found him?”

“Not here.”

thought about Cael. He had received information after I disappeared and later sent word all was dead. He had also kept the map to Silvermere hidden for years. It was difficult to elieve he knew nothing about Corvin.

Cael might know him.”

Caius nodded.

“He’ll be asked about Corvin.”

“And if he refuses?”

“He won’t leave Wraithbone until he answers.”

I looked back at the name. Cael had already refused to tell Zeron who he was protecting. I wondered if that wolf had been Corvin. If so, Cael knew more about my disappearance than he’d admitted.

“Did my parents know Corvin betrayed them?”

“Darius believed it until he died,” Elara said.

“And my mother?”

“She believed it too.”

That explained why Lyrienne had searched for him. She knew someone had taken me and had a name to follow. She wasn’t searching without direction. She had spent years trying to find both Corvin and me.

“Did she ever find him?”

“No.”

“But she kept looking?”

“Yes.”

My mother had searched for the wolf who took me while searching for me too. Somewhere along the way, her search had taken her farther north. Now we knew the last place she'd gone. Evercrest was waiting beyond Silvermere.

Caius looked through the records again. Corvin's name appeared among the wolves connected thi divided circle. Yet we'd never seen it in Wraithbone. Caius noticed the same my family's records?"

sent outside this territory," Elara said.

The wolf who took me

Silvermere hadn't known how many wolves Corvin had told about its location. Removing his name helped protect everyone still living here. His betrayal had changed how information was shared. The complete records had remained in Silvermere.

I looked at Elara.

"I want copies of everything about Corvin."

"You'll have them."

"And the map to Evercrest."

"I'll prepare that too."

I looked at Caius. We'd come here searching for answers about where I was meant to go. Now we knew who my parents were and why they'd chosen Silvermere. We also knew the name of the wolf who had carried me away.

"We find my mother."

Caius took my hand.

"And when we return to Wraithbone, we question Cael ourselves."

I looked down at Corvin Rell's name. My parents had trusted him to help bring me somewhere safe. Instead, he had used that trust to take me from them. Now I needed to know why.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 263

The plane she should have kno

Casin

The place she should have known

(Caius)

I watched Elara gather the records Isla had asked for. Corvin Rell's name remained on the page in front of us. We had finally found the wolf directly connected to Isla's disappearance. Now I wanted to know who had helped him.

"How much do you know about Corvin's life before Silvermere?"

Elara returned to the table with another book. She opened it near the middle and searched through several pages. Corvin had arrived in Silvermere as a young man. Nothing in his history had given the previous Keeper a reason to distrust him.

"Where did he come from?"

"A pack called Redmont."

I knew the name. Redmont had disappeared more than two hundred years ago after its remaining wolves joined other packs. There would be little left to search now. Still, I would have Pryor check every record Wraithbone had.

"Did Corvin have family here?"

Elara shook her head. He had never taken a mate or had children that Silvermere knew about. Most of his work had involved carrying messages between trusted territories. That explained how he'd known wolves outside Silvermere.

"Someone could have reached him during those journeys."

"That's possible."

I looked at Zeron. He understood what I was thinking without needing an explanation. Cael had protected someone even after being captured. Corvin's name would give us something different to question him about.

"We need to know whether Cael ever met him."

Zeron nodded. He would send word to the warriors guarding Cael and tell them not to question him about Corvin yet. I wanted to see Cael's reaction when he heard the name myself. A warning would only give him time to prepare an answer.

Raith picked up one of the copied records. His attention went to the date Corvin disappeared. He compared it with the date on Mara's account. Both were the same.

The place she should have known

"Corvin never returned here after taking Isla?"

"No," Elara answered.

Ctac

That meant Corvin had known he could never come back. Whatever he'd done had been planned before he carried Isla away. He had thrown away eleven years in Silvermere and betrayed wolves who trusted him. Someone had given him a reason worth losing everything.

I looked at Isla. She was reading Lyrienne's statement again. Her mother had seen Corvin carrying her away and had spent years searching for him. I could only imagine what Isla was thinking.

"Do you want some time?"

She looked at me.

"To do what?"

"Whatever you need."

Isla glanced around the building. She had received more answers since arriving in Silvermere than we'd found during all our searching in Wraithbone. Some of those answers had brought new questions. I wasn't going to rush her into another journey.

"I want to see Silvermere."

"Then we stay tonight."

She studied me for a moment.

"You don't mind waiting?"

"No."

I wanted to find Lyrienne as much as Isla did. But Evercrest wasn't going anywhere because we waited until morning. Isla had been meant to grow up here. She deserved more than a few hours inside a building filled with records.

Elara closed the book in front of her. She told us rooms could be prepared near the center of the territory. Zeron, Raith, and the warriors would have somewhere to stay as well. We could leave whenever Isla decided she was ready.

The place she should have known

Claine

Elara gathered the documents she intended to copy. She promised the records about Corvin and the map to Evercrest would be ready before we left. I thanked her and turned toward the door. Isla remained near the table.

I waited.

She looked down at Darius's name one more time. Her father had lived here, searched for her, and died believing there was a chance she had survived. Silvermere was filled with pieces of a life she should have known. I understood why walking away from the table wasn't easy.

"I'm ready."

I held out my hand.

She took it.

We left the building together.

Outside, Silvermere looked different now that I understood what it had been created to protect. Wolves moved through the territory without hiding who they were from one another. Children ran near the river while several adults worked beside the nearby homes. Isla watched everything.

Orin was waiting outside. He told us Elara had asked him to show us where we would be staying. Then he looked at Isla. His manner toward her had changed since we first arrived.

"Can I ask you something?" Isla said.

Orin nodded.

"Of course."

"Did you know my father?"

Orin’s expression changed. He looked toward the river before answering. Darius had died before Orin was born, but stories about him had remained in Silvermere. Many wolves knew about the daughter he’d lost.

“What did they say about him?”

“That he never stopped believing you lived.”

Isla

The place she should have known

Several wolves lowered their heads when Isla passed. This time she stopped and greeted some of them. An older woman told her she’d heard stories about Lyrienne since childhood. Isla asked if she remembered any of them.

“She was difficult to frighten,” the woman said.

A small smile appeared on Isla’s face.

“That sounds familiar.”

The woman laughed before continuing toward the river. Isla watched her go. I hadn’t seen that look on Isla’s face since we entered Silvermere. For a moment, the questions weren’t controlling everything.

We continued until Orin showed us the building prepared for our stay. Zeron and Raith went with the warriors to another building nearby. I told Zeron we would meet before leaving in the morning. He nodded and followed Raith.

Isla entered our room and walked toward the window. From there, we could see the river and several homes beyond it. This was the place her parents had chosen for her. She should have known these views long before today.

“Do you regret staying?”

She turned toward me.

“No.”

I walked over to her.

“Good.”

She looked outside again. Tomorrow we would follow Lyrienne’s last known path toward Evercrest. For now, Isla could remain in the place that should have been part of her childhood. I wasn’t going to take that from her.

“Tomorrow we find my mother.”

“We start looking.”

She reached for my hand.

“And after that, Corvin.”

we had names now, along with records and a destination. For tonight, that could wait w t

Tomorrow we would go farther north.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 264

The land that remind

The land that remembered

(Caius)

Orin started toward the building where we’d be staying, but Isla remained near the river. Her attention moved across Silvermere as though she wasn’t ready to go inside yet.

“Can we look around first?” she asked.

“Of course.”

I looked at Orin.

“Show her Silvermere.”

He nodded and changed direction. Instead of taking us toward the building he led us along the river and away from the center of the territory. Isla stayed beside me, watching everything we passed.

Several wolves greeted her along the way. Some stopped what they were doing and lowered their heads before continuing. Isla returned every greeting. Silvermere was already treating her as someone who belonged.

We passed several homes before reaching a garden near the river. A few children were helping an older woman gather vegetables. One little girl noticed Isla and waved. Isla smiled and waved back.

The girl hurried toward us and stopped in front of Isla. She looked up at her for a moment before smiling.

“You’re pretty.”

Isla laughed.

“Thank you.”

The girl ran back toward the garden. Isla watched her before we continued. There was something different about seeing her here among wolves who accepted her without question. Nobody looked at her as though she needed to prove anything.

We continued until the homes became fewer. The river curved toward a large field with trees surrounding most of it. Isla looked toward the other side and stopped walking. I followed her gaze.

“Caius.”

turlarate remember

“I see them.”

Three figures came from between the trees. Their upper bodies were human but the rest of them had the bodies of horses. I’d seen their kind before though it had been many years. Isla clearly hadn’t.

“Are those centaurs?”

“Yes.”

Her eyes remained on them.

“They’re real?”

I looked at her.

“Very real.”

The three centaurs continued toward us. Two were men and the third was a woman. Their attention went directly to Isla.

“Why are they here?” she asked.

Orin turned toward her.

“Silvermere protects more than wolves.”

Movement came from the trees before Isla could ask anything else. Several small figures appeared between the branches. Wings carried them toward the field. Isla stared.

“Fairies?”

Orin nodded.

“Yes.”

The fairies came closer. Most stayed away from wolf territories now. Silvermere had given them somewhere they could live without being disturbed.

“How long have they lived here?” Isla asked.

“Generations.”

Orin explained that Silvermere had become a home for creatures that needed protection. Some had come after losing their own territories. Others simply wanted somewhere they could live without being bothered. Silvermere had welcomed all of them.

The centaurs reached us first. The oldest stopped several feet in front of Isla and studied her.

– Huch

Then he lowered tearsed before her. The other two followed keture isle could speak the faries gathered in front of her. One by one they lowered their heads Vasa came forward inside lala. Vorak responded immediately.

Something is happening

Wolves farther across the field had stopped what they were doing. Others appeared along the path behind us. Their attention went toward Isla. Then they lowered their heads too.

“Why is everyone bowing? Isla asked

Onn looked around us

“They know what you are.”

Isla faced him.

“They knew that when I arrived”

“This is different.”

She looked around again.

“How?”

Orin glanced toward the creatures gathered in front of her. Centaurs, fairies and wolves had all responded without anyone telling them what to do. None appeared afraid. They were welcoming her.

“This territory was prepared for you before you were born,” Orin said.

Isla looked at him.

“And they know that?”

“Some know the story.”

The story of the Celestial child who never arrived had survived here for generations. Now Isla stood before them as their Celestial Queen. Silvermere had finally received the wolf it had once promised to protect.

“Silvermere was supposed to protect you,” Orin said.

Isla looked toward the centaurs. The oldest raised his head and placed one hand over his chest. The two beside him did the same.

The land thust remembered

“Welcome to Silvermere, Celestial Queen.”

Isla didn’t answer immediately. I stayed beside her and let her take in what was happening. She’d spent years being treated as though she had no value. Now an entire hidden territory was welcoming her.

“You don’t have to bow to me,” she said.

The centaur looked at her.

“We choose to.”

One of the fairies separated from the others and flew toward Isla. She stopped in front of her and waited. Isla held out her hand. The fairy landed on her palm.

Isla smiled as she brought her hand closer. The tiny creature looked up at her without fear.

“You’re beautiful,” Isla said.

The fairy smiled.

“So are you, Queen Isla.”

Isla laughed. Several wolves nearby smiled when they heard her. Even Orin looked pleased. I found myself watching her instead of everyone else.

The fairy left Isla’s hand and returned to the others. The centaurs rose but remained nearby. Isla continued looking around the field.

“I didn’t know places like this still existed,” she said.

“Most wolves don’t,” Orin answered.

Isla looked toward the fairies.

“That’s why Silvermere stayed hidden.”

“Partly.”

She turned toward him.

“What was the other reason?”

“Protection.”

Orin explained that hiding Silvermere protected everyone who lived there. Its location was shared only with wolves who had a reason to know. That secrecy had kept the territory safe and protected the creatures who called it home.

The land that remembered

Isla looked at me.

“My parents wanted me here because they knew I’d be safe.”

“Yes.”

She looked around the field again. I knew she was thinking about the life she might have had. She could have grown up knowing exactly what she was. She could have known her real parents.

I reached for her hand.

She took mine.

We continued along the river with Orin. Isla asked questions about everything we passed and he answered them. We saw more fairies near the water and several centaurs farther across the field. Silvermere was unlike any wolf territory Isla had known.

Eventually Orin told us we should return before evening. Isla looked back toward the field one final time. Several fairies were still flying near the trees. The centaurs had moved farther away.

“Can we come back before we leave?” she asked.

“If you want to.”

She nodded.

“I do.”

Orin led us back toward the center of Silvermere. Wolves continued greeting Isla along the She no longer seemed surprised when they lowered their heads. She greeted them in way.

return.

When we reached the building Zeron and Raith had already gone with the warriors to another building nearby. I told Zeron through the mind link they’d be ready in the morning. He answered immediately.

Isla walked toward the window. From there we could see the river and several homes beyond it. This was the place her parents had chosen for her. She should have known it long before today.

“Do you regret coming?” I asked.

She turned toward me.

“No.”

1 went to her and took her hand

“In the morning we find my mother, she said

“We start looking,” I said,

Isla looked through the window again. We had Corvin’s name, Cael waiting in Wraithbone and somewhere new to search. There were still answers we needed.

For now they could wait.

LUCX DRAW /

TK

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 265

A sign from her past

A sign from her past

(Isla)

Morning came sooner than I expected. I stood near the window and looked across

Silvermere while Caius finished getting ready. The river moved through the territory as wolves began leaving their homes. Part of me wished we’d had another day to stay.

‘We can come back, Vaela said.

‘I know.’

That made leaving easier. There were still things I wanted to learn about my father and the years he’d spent here. But first, I needed to follow my mother’s path. Evercrest was where her last message had come from.

Caius picked up our bags and looked at me. He didn’t have to ask whether I was ready because we’d already made that decision. I took one last look through the window. Then I followed him outside.

Zeron, Raith, and the four warriors were already waiting near the vehicles. Elara stood with Orin near the road. She held the map she’d promised to give us. I walked toward her.

“This will take you through the northern ridge,” Elara said.

I accepted it from her.

“Thank you.”

Elara looked at me for several seconds. There were still questions she couldn’t answer for me. Maybe my mother could. I hoped we were finally close to finding her.

“Come back when you’re ready,” she said.

“I will.”

Orin lowered his head to me. Several wolves nearby did the same. Beyond them, I could see two centaurs near the river and a few fairies above the trees. Silvermere already felt different from when we’d arrived.

Caius placed our bags inside the vehicle. I said goodbye to Elara and Orin before getting into the passenger seat. Two warriors joined us while Zeron and Raith took the second vehicle. Soon we were moving.

I watched Silvermere through the window. The homes disappeared first, followed by the river

A sign from her past and open fields. The mountains remained ahead of us. Somewhere beyond them was

Evercrest.

‘Do you feel her?’ I asked Vaela.

‘No.’

I had hoped her answer might be different. Vaela had felt Silvermere before we’d even entered the territory. If Lyrienne was somewhere ahead, I wondered whether Vaela would recognize her. Neither of us knew what to expect.

The road began climbing as we approached the northern ridge. Elara’s map showed only one route through the mountains. Caius checked it several times as we traveled. The road became narrower the farther we went.

“How long until Evercrest?”

“A few hours if the road remains clear.”

I looked ahead. Trees covered both sides of the mountain, leaving only the road between them. There were no signs showing where one territory ended and another began. Without Elara’s map, finding Evercrest would have been difficult.

The journey continued without trouble. When we reached the highest part of the ridge, Caius stopped so everyone could rest. I got out and walked toward the open land beside the road. From there, I could see part of Silvermere behind us.

Caius came beside me. He looked toward the hidden territory before turning north. Evercrest couldn't be seen from where we stood. Another mountain blocked most of the land ahead.

"Thinking about going back?" he asked.

"Not yet."

I wanted to return after we found my mother. There was too much waiting for me in Silvermere to leave it behind forever. But I couldn't think about returning yet. I needed to know what waited ahead.

"I need to know if she's there."

"We'll find out."

man in his hand. He had been studying the route with Raith while

– had already crossed

A sign from her past

"We should reach it before sunset," Zeron said.

Calus nodded.

"Then we keep moving."

425 Rout

Everyone returned to the vehicles. I settled into my seat and watched the road ahead. The farther we traveled, the fewer signs of other wolves I saw. I wondered what kind of place Evercrest would be.

An hour passed before Vaela moved inside me. I sat straighter and waited for her to speak. She didn't say anything at first. Her attention had gone somewhere beyond the vehicle.

'What is it?'

'I don't know.'

I looked toward the trees. Nothing moved between them. Caius noticed the change in me and glanced over. He had probably felt Vaela through our bond.

“What does she feel?”

“She doesn’t know.”

We continued without stopping. Whatever Vaela had noticed didn’t disappear. It became easier to feel as we traveled. I tried to understand what had caught her attention.

‘Is it another wolf?’

‘No.’

That surprised me. Whatever she felt didn’t seem dangerous. She wasn’t warning me to turn around. Instead, she seemed determined to keep going.

‘Then what is it?’

‘Keep going.’

The road began descending on the other side of the mountain. Trees opened enough for me to see land stretching ahead of us. A river crossed through the valley below. Homes appeared in the distance.

Caius reduced our speed. A wooden marker stood beside the road. Time had worn away most of the writing, but one word remained clear. I leaned forward when I saw it.

“Evercrest.”

A skin from her past

“We found it.”

kept looking ahead as we continued down the road. Zeron’s vehicle remained behind us. There were signs of wolves now, including tracks beside the road and smoke rising beyond the trees. Evercrest wasn’t abandoned.

We passed the first home several minutes later. A man standing outside stopped when he saw our vehicles. Another wolf appeared near the trees and watched us pass. Neither tried to stop us.

“They know we’re here,” I said.

“They do.”

More homes appeared as we traveled farther into the territory. Wolves stopped to watch us, but their reaction wasn't like Silvermere. Nobody bowed or came toward us. They simply watched.

I was grateful for that. Right now, I didn't want to think about being their Celestial Queen. I was a daughter searching for her mother. That was why I'd come.

Vaela moved again.

'Isla.'

'What?'

Her attention went toward the trees.

'Stop.'

"Caius, stop."

He stopped the vehicle. Zeron stopped behind us a moment later. I opened the door and got out. Vaela kept pulling my attention toward the trees.

Caius came with me. Zeron and Raith left the other vehicle but remained near it. I walked several steps from the road. The feeling inside me became stronger.

"What does Vaela sense?" Caius asked.

"I don't know yet."

An old path led away from the road. It looked as though wolves still used it. Vaela wouldn't let me look away. I followed her attention toward one of the trees.

'There.'

Trom her past

Something had been carved into the trunk. I walked closer until I could see it clearly. My breath caught when I recognized the mark. It was the divided circle.

Caius stopped beside me. I reached out and touched the symbol with my fingers. We'd seen it many times since searching for answers about my past. But this time Vaela knew something I didn't.

'She was here, Vaela said.

I stared at the mark.

‘You know that?’

‘Yes.’

I turned toward Caius. I didn’t need another old record to tell me we were following the right path. Vaela had found something the maps couldn’t give us. My mother had come this way.

“She was here.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 266

The message she left

The message she left

(Isla)

Caius looked at the divided circle before turning toward the path. I kept my fingers against the mark while Vaela remained close. She was certain Lyrienne had been here. I wanted to know how she knew.

‘What are you feeling?’

‘Her.’

I closed my eyes for a moment. Vaela had never known our mother, but something inside her recognized what had been left behind. Maybe Celestial wolves could sense things other wolves couldn’t. I wasn’t going to question it when it had brought us this far.

“Vaela can feel her,” I said.

Caius looked at me.

“From the symbol?”

“I think so.”

He studied the path again. It disappeared between the trees and seemed to lead farther away from the homes we’d passed. There was no sign telling us where it ended. I knew I wanted to follow it.

Zeron and Raith came closer. The four warriors remained near the vehicles and watched the road. Zeron looked at the divided circle carved into the tree. He recognized it immediately.

“Another one,” Zeron said.

I nodded.

“My mother left this one.”

Raith looked toward the path. He walked to the entrance but didn’t go any farther. The ground showed signs that wolves still traveled through there. Whatever waited ahead wasn’t forgotten.

“Do we leave the vehicles here?” Raith asked.

Caius looked at the road.

“For now.”

He told two warriors to remain with the vehicles. The other two joined us while Zee checked the map. Nothing Elara had given us showed where the path led

“We follow it,” I said.

Caius nodded.

“We stay together.”

We entered the trees with Caius beside me. Zeron and Raith came with us while the two warriors watched behind us. The path was wide enough for several wolves to walk together. I kept waiting for Vaela to tell me where we were going

‘Can you still feel her?

‘Yes.’

‘Is it getting stronger?’

‘Yes.’

That was all I needed. We continued through the trees until the sounds from the main road disappeared behind us. I could hear water somewhere ahead. The path began curving toward

We reached a narrow river several minutes later. A wooden bridge crossed to the other side. Another divided circle had been carved into one of the posts. This one was easier to see.

“She marked the way,” I said.

Caius examined it.

“Looks like it.”

I crossed the bridge and found another path on the other side. Vaela became more alert with every step. I could feel her need to continue matching mine. Whatever waited ahead mattered to both of us.

The trees opened into a small clearing. An old building stood near the river with a garden beside it. Smoke came from the chimney. Someone lived there.

I stopped walking.

‘Vaela?’

‘Not her.’

The page whe left

My hope fell before I could stop it. I had wanted Vaela to tell me Lyrienne was inside. Instead, she remained focused on the building. There had to be another reason she’d brought us here.

The door opened.

An older man stepped outside. His eyes moved across all of us before stopping on me. He stared long enough that Caius moved closer.

“Who are you?” the man asked.

“My name is Isla.”

His face changed.

I didn’t need to say anything else. He knew the name. His reaction told me before he could hide it. I stepped closer.

“You know who I am.”

The man looked at Caius.

“You’re the Alpha King.”

Caius didn’t answer immediately. The man already knew exactly who stood before him. His attention returned to me.

“I asked if you know me,” I said.

“I know your name.”

“How?”

He looked toward the divided circle near the bridge. I followed his gaze. Whoever he was, he knew what the symbol meant. I waited for him to answer.

“Someone told me you might come one day.”

My heart raced.

“Who?”

The man looked at me.

“Lyrienne.”

Vaela came forward again. I stared at the man while everything else seemed less important. He had spoken my mother’s name as though he’d known her.

She left

“You knew my mother?”

“Yes.”

“Where is she?”

He didn’t answer immediately. I didn’t like the way he looked toward the building. My mind went through every answer I didn’t want to hear.

“Please.”

“Come inside.”

I stayed where I was.

“Tell me where she is.”

The man looked at Caius before facing me again. He seemed to understand I wasn't going anywhere without an answer. I had followed my mother's path too far to accept another delay.

"She left Evercrest years ago."

I stared at him.

"Where did she go?"

"I don't know."

I looked away. We'd reached the place where her last message had come from only to learn she'd left. Vaela remained alert instead of disappointed. That stopped me from walking away.

'There's more.'

'You can feel it?'

'Yes.'

I faced the man again.

"What did she leave behind?"

His eyes widened.

"How did you know?"

I didn't answer.

The message she left

The man opened the door and stepped aside. Caius looked at me, leaving the decision to me.

I knew what I wanted.

"We're going inside."

Caius nodded.

Zeron told the warriors to remain outside with Raith. He followed Caius and me into the building. The older man closed the door once we were inside.

The main area was filled with books and boxes. Several maps covered one wall. I saw the divided circle on some of them. Lyrienne had been doing more than searching for me.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Tavian.”

I looked around.

“This was hers?”

“Some of it.”

Tavian walked toward a wooden chest near the wall. He opened it and removed a wrapped bundle. Then he carried it toward me.

“She gave me this before she left.”

“For me?”

“Only if you came.”

I stared at the bundle. My mother had left Evercrest without knowing whether I was alive. Yet she’d prepared something in case I found my way here. I reached for it.

Tavian placed it in my hands.

“What is it?”

“A message.”

My fingers stopped.

“From my mother?”

“Yes.”

I looked at Caius. He remained beside me while I began removing the cloth. Something hard was wrapped inside.

A small book appeared

My name was written across the cover

I stared at it

Lyrienne had written this for me

Wate

THE

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 267

Hamle they gave me

The name they gave me

(Caius)

Isla stared at the book in her hands. A name had been written across the cover, but it wasn't the name she had known all her life. I saw her eyes move over it more than once. Then she looked at Tavian.

"Isalienne Rowan."

Tavian nodded.

"The name your parents gave you."

Isla looked down at the cover again. I could see the moment she understood why part of the name felt familiar. Isla was still there, but someone had taken the rest away. Rowan belonged to Darius.

"Derek and Helene changed it."

"They shortened your name and gave you Derek's family name."

Isla ran her fingers across the writing. Everything we'd learned about her disappearance came back to the message found in Silvermere. Her name would be changed and her blood would remain hidden. Now we knew exactly what those words meant.

"They kept Isla."

"Yes."

Isla opened the book. Writing covered the first page, and she stopped when she saw the name again. Lyrienne had written to the daughter she knew as Isalienne. Isla began reading.

My Isalienne,

She stared at those words. Vaela came closer inside her, and Vorak noticed her immediately. I reached across the table and took Isla's hand. She continued reading.

"If this book has reached you, then something I prayed for has happened. You survived. Whatever name you have known, remember that Isalienne Rowan was the name your father and I gave you. You were ours before anyone took you away."

Isla stopped reading. Her fingers remained against the page. Tavian said nothing from across the table. This belonged to Isla.

"My mother knew they might change my name."

She must have suspected it."

426 Pont ista returned to the page. Lyrienne wrote about the message claiming her daughter had died. Wolves around her had accepted it after their searches failed. She never did.

"I could never accept that you were gone. Your father couldn't accept it either. Darius loved you before he ever held you. He spoke your name every day while we waited for you."

Isla looked down at the cover again. She had already learned that Darius searched for her. Hearing about him through Lyrienne gave her something different. These weren't records written by wolves who had watched from outside.

"What was he like? Isla asked

Tavian came closer

"Lyrienne talked about him often."

He told Isla that Darius had been certain they were having a daughter before anyone confirmed it. He had helped choose Isalienne and prepared for her arrival in Silvermere. Everything had been ready for the child who never arrived. He had spent years hoping the reports about her death were wrong.

Isla turned another page. Corvin Rell's name appeared among Lyrienne's writing. I moved closer to read with her. This was where her search had taken her.

“I found Corvin’s trail years after you disappeared. By then I knew he couldn’t have acted without help. He knew where you would be, when you would be moved, and which wolves were involved. Someone gave him that information.”

Zeron came closer when Isla finished reading. We had already suspected Corvin hadn’t acted alone. Lyrienne had discovered the same thing centuries ago. She had spent years trying to find the wolf behind him.

Isla continued reading. Lyrienne had followed every name connected to Corvin. Some led nowhere, but others brought her closer to wolves with influence outside their own territories. Then she discovered something that changed her search.

“Someone connected to the High Council knew about you before your birth. I don’t know how much they knew or who gave Corvin his orders. I stopped recording names when I realized my search might be watched. I couldn’t risk leaving everything I knew in one place.”

Isla looked at me. I understood what she was thinking. Evander had been involved in what happened much later, but Lyrienne’s words reached back centuries. Someone else had been involved before Evander was even born.

hey gave me

“This started long before Evander.”

“It did.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 268

Isla looked back at the book. We had another piece of the conspiracy, but no name. Whoever had helped Corvin had known enough about Silvermere’s plans to stop Isla from reaching safety. That kind of information hadn’t been easy to get.

She turned another page. Lyrienne explained that Corvin disappeared after taking Isla to Ashcrest. He never returned to Silvermere or Redmont. Someone had met him after he completed what he’d been sent to do.

“I learned that Corvin left Ashcrest after placing you there. He traveled north before disappearing again. I believe he went to meet the wolf who helped him. I intend to follow him.”

Isla stopped.

“Did she tell you where?”

Tavian shook his head.

“Not when she left.”

I looked at him.

“But you learned later.”

“Yes.”

Isla continued reading before asking anything else. The next pages returned to Darius and the life her parents had wanted for her. Lyrienne wrote about Silvermere and why they had chosen it.

“We wanted you somewhere you could grow knowing what you were. Your father wanted you to run beside the river and know the wolves who would protect you. We wanted you to have choices. Someone took those years from all of us.”

Isla closed her eyes. I kept hold of her hand. Nothing I said could replace what had been stolen from her. But now she knew her parents hadn’t abandoned her.

She opened her eyes and continued. Lyrienne wrote about the name Isalienne again. She explained that Darius had chosen part of it while she had chosen the rest.

“Your father called you Isla before you were born. It became our name for you before we ever held you. If you are reading this under another name, I hope some part of the one we gave

The name they gave me you remained.”

Isla looked at me.

“They didn’t take all of it.”

“No.”

She looked down at Isalienne Rowan. Derek and Helene had removed enough to hide where she’d come from, but Isla had remained. She had carried part of her real name without knowing it.

Isla reached the final page. Only a few lines remained beneath Lyrienne’s last entry. A place name had been written at the bottom.

“Frostvale.”

Tavian looked at her.

“North of Evercrest.”

Isla turned the book toward me. Lyrienne had written that Corvin’s trail continued there. She had left Evercrest intending to follow it.

“Did she return?” Isla asked.

“No.”

Isla stared at the last page. Her mother had left Evercrest searching for Corvin and the wolf behind him. Whatever she’d discovered had taken her farther north. There were no entries after Frostvale.

Isla closed the book and held it against her.

“Then we go to Frostvale.”

I looked at her.

“We will.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 269

The name they gave me

(Caius)

Isla stared at the book in her hands. A name had been written across the cover, but it wasn’t the name she had known all her life. I saw her eyes move over it more than once. Then she looked at Tavian.

“Isalienne Rowan.”

Tavian nodded.

“The name your parents gave you.”

Isla looked down at the cover again. I could see the moment she understood why part of the name felt familiar. Isla was still there, but someone had taken the rest away, Rowan belonged to Darius.

“Derek and Helene changed it.”

“They shortened your name and gave you Derek’s family name.”

Isla’ran her fingers across the writing. Everything we’d learned about her disappearance came back to the message found in Silvermere. Her name would be changed and her blood would remain hidden. Now we knew exactly what those words meant.

“They kept Isla.”

“Yes.”

Isla opened the book. Writing covered the first page, and she stopped when she saw the name again. Lyrienne had written to the daughter she knew as Isalienne. Isla began reading.

My Isalienne,

She stared at those words. Vaela came closer inside her, and Vorak noticed her immediately. I reached across the table and took Isla’s hand. She continued reading.

“If this book has reached you, then something I prayed for has happened. You survived. Whatever name you have known, remember that Isalienne Rowan was the name your father and I gave you. You were ours before anyone took you away.”

Isla stopped reading. Her fingers remained against the page. Tavian said nothing from across the table. This belonged to Isla.

“My mother knew they might change my name.”

“She must have suspected it.”

Isla returned to the page. Lyrienne wrote about the message claiming her daughter had died. Wolves around her had accepted it after their searches failed. She never did.

“I could never accept that you were gone. Your father couldn’t accept it either. Darius loved you before he ever held you. He spoke your name every day while we waited for you.”

Isla looked down at the cover again. She had already learned that Darius searched for her. Hearing about him through Lyrienne gave her something different. These weren’t records written by wolves who had watched from outside.

“What was he like?” tsla asked.

Tavian came closer.

“Lyrienne talked about him often.”

He told Isla that Darius had been certain they were having a daughter before anyone confirmed it. He had helped choose Isalienne and prepared for her arrival in Silvermere. Everything had been ready for the child who never arrived. He had spent years hoping the reports about her death were wrong.

Isla turned another page. Corvin Rell’s name appeared among Lyrienne’s writing. I moved closer to read with her. This was where her search had taken her.

“I found Corvin’s trail years after you disappeared. By then I knew he couldn’t have acted without help. He knew where you would be, when you would be moved, and which wolves were involved. Someone gave him that information.”

Zeron came closer when Isla finished reading. We had already suspected Corvin hadn’t acted alone. Lyrienne had discovered the same thing centuries ago. She had spent years trying to find the wolf behind him.

Isla continued reading. Lyrienne had followed every name connected to Corvin. Some led nowhere, but others brought her cioser to wolves with influence outside their own territories. Then she discovered something that changed her search.

“Someone connected to the High Council knew about you before your birth. I don’t know how much they knew or who gave Corvin his orders. I stopped recording names when I realized my search might be watched. I couldn’t risk leaving everything 1 knew in one place.”

in/one

Isla looked at me. I understood what she was thinking. Evander had been involved in what happened much later, but Lyrienne’s words reached back centuries. Someone else had been involved before Evander was even born.

“This started long before Evander.”

“It did.”

Isla looked back at the book. We had another piece of the conspiracy, but no name. Whoever had helped Corvin had known enough about Silvermere’s plans to stop Isla from reaching safety. That kind of information hadn’t been easy to get.

She turned another page. Lyrienne explained that Corvin disappeared after taking Isla to Ashcrest. He never returned to Silvermere or Redmont. Someone had met him after he completed what he’d been sent, to do.

“I learned that Corvin left Ashcrest after placing you there. He traveled north before disappearing again. I believe he went to meet the wolf who helped him. I intend to follow him.”

Isla stopped.

“Did she tell you where?”

“Not when she left.”

I looked at him.

“But you learned later.”

“Yes.”

Isla continued reading before asking anything else. The next pages returned to Darius and the life her parents had wanted for her. Lyrienne wrote about Silvermere and why they had chosen it.

“We wanted you somewhere you could grow knowing what you were. Your father wanted you to run beside the river and know the wolves who would protect you. We wanted you to have choices. Someone took those years from all of us.”

Isla closed her eyes. I kept hold of her hand. Nothing I said could replace what had been stolen from her. But now she knew her parents hadn’t abandoned her.

She opened her eyes and continued. Lyrienne wrote about the name Isalienne again. She explained that Darius had chosen part of it while she had chosen the rest.

“Your father called you Isla before you were born. It became our name for you before we ever held you. If you are reading this under another name, I hope some part of the one we gave you remained.”

Isla looked at me.

“They didn’t take all of it.”

“No.”

She looked down at Isalienne Rowan. Derek and Helene had removed enough to hide where she’d come from, but Isla had remained. She had carried part of her real name without knowing it.

Isla reached the final page. Only a few lines remained beneath Lyrienne’s last entry. A place name had been written at the bottom.

“Frostvale.”

Tavian looked at her.

“North of Evercrest.”

Isla turned the book toward me Lyrienne had written that Corvin’s trail continued there. She had left Evercrest intending to follow it.

“Did she return?” Isla asked.

“No.”

Isla stared at the last page. Her mother had left Evercrest searching for Corvin and the wolf behind him. Whatever she’d discovered had taken her farther north. There were no entries after Frostvale.

Isla closed the book and held it against her.

I looked at her.

“We will.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 270

(The name on the tree

The name on the tree

(Isla)

I kept the book against me while Tavian returned to the chest. Frostvale was another name I’d never heard before today. My mother had gone there searching for Corvin and never returned to Evercrest. I needed to know everything Tavian could tell us before we followed her.

“How far is Frostvale?”

“About a day’s journey from here.”

I looked at Caius. There were still several hours of daylight left, and we had no reason to remain in Evercrest until morning. We could cover part of the distance before stopping. I wanted to keep moving.

“We should leave.”

Caius nodded.

“I agree.”

Tavian looked at the book in my hands. He didn’t ask for it back, and I knew he never would. Lyrienne had left it for me. It belonged with me now.

“Is there anything else I should know before we go?”

Tavian thought about my question.

“Only that your mother didn’t trust easily by the time she left here.”

I waited for him to continue. Lyrienne had already discovered someone connected to the High Council knew about me. She had also begun to believe her search was being watched. That explained why she’d stopped recording names.

“Did she travel alone?”

“Yes.”

I looked down at the book. My mother had gone after Corvin without knowing what waited for her. She had already spent years searching for me. Nothing had convinced her to stop.

“Did you try to stop her?”

Tavian looked at me.

“She wouldn’t have listened.”

I smiled. From everything I’d learned about Lyrienne, I could believe that. Once she decided she was going after Corvin, nobody would have changed her mind. Vaela seemed pleased by the thought.

‘She sounds like us.

I was thinking the same thing.

The name on the tree

Tavian walked to one of the maps orrthe wall. He removed it and brought it to the table. Unlike Elara's map, this one showed the land north of Evercrest. Frostvale had been marked near the top.

"This is the route she took."

I moved closer.

"You know that?"

"I watched her leave."

Tavian pointed to a road that followed the river north. It continued for several miles before turning toward the mountains. From there, it crossed into land I didn't recognize. Frostvale was beyond them.

"Can we take the vehicles?" i

"For most of it."

Caius looked at the map.

"Where does the road end?"

Tavian pointed to the mountain crossing. The road became too narrow there for vehicles, but he said there was another route around the mountain. It would take longer. Caius studied both options.

"We'll decide when we reach it."

I nodded.

"Then we should.go."

Tavian gave us the map. I thanked him before looking around the building again. My mother had spent part of her life here. Now I was leaving through the same door she had used when she went looking for Corvin.

We stepped outside. Zeron, Raith, and the two warriors were waiting near the bridge. They looked toward us as we approached. Zeron noticed the book immediately.

"We have another destination," Caius said.

Zeron looked at him.

"Where?"

“Frostvale.”

Raith glanced toward the path behind us. The other two warriors were still waiting with the vehicles. We had enough supplies to continue without returning to Silvermere. There was nothing keeping us in Evercrest.

We crossed the bridge. I looked at the divided circle carved into the post as I passed it. Lyrienne had left marks that had eventually brought me to Tavian. I wondered whether there would be more on the road to Frostvale.

‘There will be, Vaela said.

“I can still feel her

I stopped.

‘Even now?’

‘Yes.’

I looked toward the north. Vaela’s connection to whatever Lyrienne had left behind hadn’t disappeared after finding the book. If anything, she seemed more aware of it now: My mother had gone in the same direction we were about to travel.

Caius noticed I’d stopped.

“What is it?”

“Vaela can still feel her.”

His attention moved toward the north.

“Then we follow her.”

We returned to the vehicles and found the other warriors exactly where we’d left them. Caius explained that we were continuing toward Frostvale. Nobody questioned the decision. Within minutes, we were ready to leave.

I climbed into the passenger seat with Lyrienne’s book on my lap. Caius placed Tavian’s map beside him before starting the vehicle. Zeron and Raith returned to the second one. We continued through Evercrest.

Wolves watched us as we passed. I wondered how many of them had heard stories about Lyrienne. Tavian had known exactly who I was when I gave him my name. Maybe my mother had spoken about me to more wolves than I realized.

Soon the homes became fewer. The road followed the river exactly as Tavian had shown us. Evercrest began disappearing behind us. I opened the book again.

Isalienne Rowan.

I read the name without speaking. It still felt strange, but it didn't feel wrong. Ista had always belonged to

"Are you thinking about the name?" Caius asked.

"Yes."

He glanced at me.

"Do you want to use it?"

I looked at the cover. Isalienne was the name my parents had chosen, and I wanted to keep it because it was part of me. But Isla was the name I'd heard every day of my life. I didn't need to decide anything yet.

"I'm still Isla."

The name on the tree

Gaius nodded.

"You are."

I closed the book. Learning my full name hadn't changed who I was. It had given me another piece of myself. Derek and Helene had hidden it, but they hadn't destroyed it.

The road continued north beside the river. We had several hours before the sun went down. Caius intended to travel as far as we could before stopping. That would put us closer to Frostvale by morning.

After another hour, Vaela became alert again. I looked away from the book and toward the trees. The feeling I'd noticed in Evercrest had returned. This time I understood it.

'Another mark?'

'Close.'

I looked toward Caius.

"Vaela feels something."

He reduced our speed.

“Which direction?”

I looked ahead. The river curved toward the mountains, and an old road continued beside it. A large tree stood where the road divided. Something had been carved into its trunk.

“There.”

Caius stopped the vehicle. I got out with the book still in my hands and walked toward the tree. The divided circle had been carved into the wood.

Below it was something new.

A single word.

Isalienne.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 271

Her message to me

(Isla)

I stared at the name carved beneath the divided circle. Isalienne was written deep enough into the tree that years hadn’t erased it. My mother had known this road would matter if I ever followed her. Vaela remained close as I touched the letters.

‘She left it for us.

‘How can you know?’

‘Because I feel her here.’

I kept my hand against the tree and looked toward the two roads ahead. One followed the river while the other turned toward the mountain. Tavian’s map showed both routes, but only one eventually reached Frostvale. I looked back when Caius approached.

“Which road?” he asked.

“The one toward the mountain.”

Caius took the map from the vehicle and opened it. Frostvale was marked beyond the mountain, exactly where Tavian had shown us. The longer road followed the fiver before circling around. The shorter route went directly toward the crossing.

“Vaela thinks our mother went that way.”

“Then that’s the way we’ll take.”

Zeron and Raith joined us while the warriors remained near the vehicles. Caius showed them the route and explained what Vaela had sensed. Raith looked at the narrow road leading toward the mountain. It appeared wide enough for the vehicles from where we stood.

“We can drive until the road changes,” Zeron said.

Caius folded the map.

“That’s the plan.”

I looked at Isalienne one more time before returning to the vehicle. Lyrienne had followed this road centuries ago while searching for the daughter she believed was alive. Now I was following the same path while searching for her. I wondered whether she’d ever imagined that happening.

We turned onto the mountain road. Trees covered most of the land around us, and the river disappeared behind them. I kept Lyrienne’s book on my lap as we traveled. Vaela remained focused on what waited ahead.

‘Do you think there are more marks?’

‘Yes’

‘Can you tell where?’

Her message to me

‘Not yet.”

The road continued upward for nearly an hour. There were no homes or signs of another territory. I checked the trees whenever we passed one large enough to hold a mark. Nothing appeared.

Caius looked toward me.

“She’s still there?”

“Yes.”

He returned his attention to the road. Zeron and Raith followed close behind us. The warriors hadn’t reparted anything unusual since leaving Evercrest. We continued toward the mountain crossing.

The road eventually became too narrow for both vehicles. Caius stopped before the ground changed completely. Tavian had warned us this would happen. From here, we either continued on foot or returned to the longer route.

“We ‘walk,” I said.

Caius looked toward the mountain.

“We’ll need supplies.”

Zeron and the warriors began gathering what we would need. Nobody suggested turning around and taking the longer road. Vaela had led us here for a reason. I wasn’t willing to ignore her now.

We left the vehicles with two warriors. The other two came with us while Zeron and Raith carried supplies. Caius took Tavian’s map. I carried Lyrienne’s book inside my bag.

The mountain path wasn’t difficult for wolves. We moved through it faster than humans could have managed. Trees became fewer as we climbed. Vaela became more interested in the land with every mile.

‘We’re close.’

‘To Frostvale?’

‘To something.’

I looked around but saw nothing except trees and roek. The path curved around the mountain before descending again. I could see another valley beyond it. Frostvale had to be sornewhere ahead.

Caius stopped.

“What?”

I pointed toward a tree beside the path.

“Another one.”

The divided circle had been carved into the trunk. Beneath it was Isalienne again, but this time something else had been added. An arrow pointed toward a smaller path leaving the main route. I walked toward it.

“She wanted me to leave the road.”

Het message to me

Caius studied the smaller path.

Then we find out why.”

We followed it for several minutes. The land descended toward a stream hidden between the trees. I noticed an old stone structure near the water. Most of it had been reclaimed by the forest.

Vaela reacted immediately.

‘There.’

I stopped.

‘What is it?’

‘Something of hers.”

I hurried toward the structure with Caius beside me. There was no door left, and part of the roof had fallen years ago. Inside stood a stone table and the remains of an old fireplace. Someone had once used this place for shelter.

I walked toward the table. Another divided circle had been carved into its surface. Beneath it were several words. This time they weren’t my name.

If you found this, keep going.

I stared at the message. Lyrienne hadn’t known whether I would ever reach this place, yet she’d continued leaving a path for me. She had wanted me to find whatever waited beyond these mountains. My fingers moved over the words.

“She knew I might follow her someday.”

Caius came beside me.

“She hoped you would.”

I looked around the abandoned shelter again. There had to be a reason Lyrienne had brought me away from the main road. Vaela still hadn't settled. She wanted me to keep looking.

'Where?'

'Near the fireplace.

I crossed to it and crouched beside the stones. One looked different from the others. I moved it aside and found a small opening behind it. Something had been placed inside.

"Caius."

He came over as I reached into the opening. My fingers closed around a small wooden box. Dust covered the top, but the divided circle was still visible. I carried it to the table.

Zeron and Raith entered behind us. Neither spoke as I opened the box. Inside was a piece of folded cloth and a necklace. I recognized the stone hanging from it.

It matched the stone from my birth record.

* Her message to me picked it up.

Mother!

Vaela's voice filled my mind

"She wore this."

I looked at Caius.

"Vaela knows it."

He watched the necklace in my hand.

"Then Lyrienne left it here."

I unfolded the cloth beneath it. Words had been written across the inside. Only one sentence remained clear after all these years.

Find me where the Celestials began.

I read it again. Frostvale was no longer simply where Corvin's trail had taken my mother. Lyrienne had discovered something else there. Something connected to what I was.

I closed my hand around the necklace.

“We keep going.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 272

Where no wolf followed

(Caius)

Isla placed the necklace around her neck before returning the cloth to the box. The stone rested against her chest as though it belonged there. I watched her touch it once before looking toward the entrance. She had already made her decision.

“We should move.”

Zeron nodded.

“We still have daylight.”

We left the stone shelter and returned to the mountain path. Isla stayed close while Raith and the warriors followed behind us. The smaller path eventually joined the main route again. Tavian’s map showed Frostvale beyond the valley ahead.

We continued down the mountain. Isla checked the trees as we walked, searching for more marks from Lyrienne. None appeared for the next hour. Vorak remained unusually attentive.

‘What do you feel?’

‘Something old.

I looked toward the valley.

‘Celestial?’

‘I don’t know.’

That answer kept me alert. Vorak rarely had difficulty recognizing another wolf. Whatever waited beyond the mountain wasn’t something he understood. I didn’t tell Isla yet because Vaela already had enough pulling at her attention.

The path became wider as we descended. Signs of wolves appeared before we reached the bottom. Footprints crossed the softer ground near a stream. Someone had traveled through recently.

“Frostvale must be close,” Isla said.

“It is.”

She touched the necklace again. Vaela had remained near the surface since Isla found it. I could feel the difference through our bond. Both of them were ready for whatever waited ahead.

Trees opened several minutes later. A large valley stretched beyond them with mountains surrounding it on three sides. Buildings stood near a wide lake in the distance. Smoke rose from several chimneys.

“Frostvale,” Isla said.

“Looks like it.”

Zeron came beside us with the map. He compared the valley with Tavian’s markings. Everything matched. We had reached the place Lyrienne had gone after leaving Evercrest.

We should expect them to know we’re here,” Zeron said.

“They already do.”

Raith looked toward the trees.

“You see someone?”

“No.”

Vorak had sensed the wolves before I did. Several remained hidden amorig the trees on either side of us. They weren’t approaching, but they were watching.

“We keep walking.”

Nobody argued.

We followed the path into the valley. The wolves watching us remained out of sight. Isla didn’t seem concerned about them. Her attention had gone toward the lake.

‘Vaela?’

‘She feels something.’

‘Your mother?

Isla glanced at me.

‘Not her.

I looked toward the lake again. Whatever both our wolves sensed seemed connected to the same place. Frostvale was already different from the other territories we’d visited. Something about the land itself felt older.

Three wolves stepped onto the road ahead. They were in human form and made no attempt to threaten us. The oldest stood in the center. His attention moved over everyone before settling on me.

“Alpha King Caius.”

“You know me.”

He lowered his head.

“Your arrival was felt.”

That wasn’t the answer I expected. I looked at Isla. She had heard it too.

“Felt by whom?” I asked.

“Frostvale.”

The man’s attention moved to Isla. His eyes stopped on the necklace around her neck. Every trace of calm disappeared from his face..

“Where did you get that?”

Where no welftellewed

Iela touched the stone.

“It belonged to my mother.”

The man stared at her

“Your mother?”

“Lyrienne Vale.”

He took a step backward. The two wolves beside him looked at each other. Neither seemed prepared for what Isla had said.

“What’s your name?” I asked.

“Theron.”

Isla moved closer.

“You knew Lyrienne?”

Theron looked at the necklace again.

“Everyone here knew her.”

Isla stopped.

“She came here?”

“Yes.”

That confirmed what the journal had told us. Lyrienne had reached Frostvale after leaving Evercrest. Whatever happened afterward was something these wolves might know.

“When?” Isla asked.

Theron studied her face.

“Long ago.”

Isla’s expression changed.

“I know that.”

Theron looked at me before returning his attention to her. He seemed uncertain about what he should say.

I didn’t like hesitation when Isla had traveled this far for answers.

“Tell her what you know.”

Theron remained silent for several seconds.

“Not here.”

I looked around us More wolves had annoared between the tran

Where no welfhellowed Theron nodded.

“Follow me.”

We continued toward the lake. Wolves appeared near the homes as we approached. Their attention moved toward Isla, but nobody bowed as they had in Silvermere. Most seemed confused by her presence.

Then an older woman saw the necklace

She dropped what she was carrying.

Isla stopped.

The woman stared at her before hurrying toward us. Theron tried to speak, but she ignored him. Her eyes remained fixed on Isla.

“That necklace belonged to Lyrienne.”

Isla touched it.

“She was my mother.”

The woman’s face lost its color. She looked at Isla as though she’d said something impossible. Then her eyes moved over Isla’s face.

“No.”

Isla frowned.

“What?”

The woman stepped closer. Tears filled her eyes as she studied Isla. Her hands began trembling.

“You have her eyes.”

Isla didn’t move.

“You knew her?”

The woman nodded.

“I did.”

Isla swallowed.

“Then tell me where she went.”

The woman looked toward the mountains beyond the lake. Something in her expression made me move closer to Isla. Vorak became restless again.

“She went where no wolf was supposed to follow.”

Isla touched the necklace.

“Where the Celestials began?”

Where no weiffellowed

The woman looked at her in surprise.

“You know about that place?”

“My mother left me a message.”

The woman stared at Isla for several seconds. Then she looked toward the far side of the lake. An old stone structure stood partly hidden among the trees.

“If Lyrienne told you to find it, then she believed you would come.”

Isla looked toward the structure.

“What is it?”

The woman lowered her voice.

“The entrance.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 273

She went inside

(Isla)

I looked across the lake at the stone structure. From where we stood, it didn’t look like an entrance to anything. Trees surrounded most of it, and part of the stone had disappeared beneath vines. Vaela hadn’t stopped watching it.

“An entrance to where?”

The woman looked at me.

“A place beneath the mountain.”

I looked toward the mountains surrounding Frostvale. The structure stood near the bottom of the largest one. Nothing about it explained why wolves weren’t supposed to follow. I needed more than another warning.

“What’s your name?”

“Maera.”

I touched the necklace.

“Tell me what my mother found.”

Maera looked toward Theron. Whatever they knew had been protected for a long time. Theron gave her a small nod. She turned back to me.

“Lyrienne came here searching for Corvin Rell.”

I waited.

“Did she find him?”

“No.”

That wasn’t what I’d hoped to hear. My mother had followed Corvin from Evercrest because she believed he could lead her to whoever had helped him. If he hadn’t been here, something else had convinced her to stay. The message she’d left proved that.

“Then why did she go to the entrance?”

“Because Corvin had been there.”

Caius stepped closer.

“How did she know?”

Maera explained that Lyrienne found the divided circle carved near the entrance. Someone had added ring bar

“A crescent crossed by three lines.

Hooked at Caius. I hadn't seen anything like that in Lyrienne's book. Vaela didn't recognize it either. We had another piece to remember.

"Is it still there?"

Maera nodded.

"Yes."

I looked across the lake again. If Corvin had reached this place, my mother had been following the right trail. Something connected him to whatever existed beneath that mountain. I wanted to see it myself.

"Take us there."

Theron stepped forward.

"You need to understand something first."

I faced him.

"What?"

"No wolf has entered that place in generations."

I frowned. That didn't fit what Maera had just told us. If Corvin had been there, someone must have seen evidence of him. Theron seemed to understand my confusion.

"He reached the entrance."

"But he didn't go inside?"

"We don't know."

I looked toward the structure again. Vaela became more interested the longer we stood there. She wasn't afraid of whatever waited beyond it. Instead, I could feel her need to get closer.

'We need to go.

'I know.'

Caius looked at me.

"Vaela?"

“She wants to see it.”

His eyes moved toward the mountain.

“Then we see it.”

Theron led us around the lake. Maera came with us while Zeron, Raith, and the warriors followed Wolves watched from a distance but dide

She went inside-

appeared from across the lake. Two stone pillars stood on either side of an opening. Darkness filled the passage beyond them.

“There.”

Maera pointed toward the left pillar.

I walked closer.

The divided circle had been carved near the bottom.

Beside it was another symbol.

A crescent crossed by three lines.

“Corvin,” I said.

“That’s what Lyrienne believed.”

I crouched and touched the mark. Vaela reacted to the divided circle immediately, but nothing happened when my fingers reached the other symbol. Whatever it represented had nothing to do with Celestials. At least not in the same way.

“How old is this?”

Theron came closer.

“Older than Frostvale.”

I stood and looked into the passage. Cold air came from somewhere inside. The entrance continued farther than I could see. There were markings along both walls.

“Where does it lead?”

“Nobody living knows.”

I looked at Maera.

“But my mother went inside.”

“Yes.”

My chest tightened at the answer. Lyrienne had entered a place everyone else feared to follow. She hadn’t returned to Frostvale afterward. That meant the next part of her trail was somewhere beyond this entrance.

“How long did you wait for her?”

Maera looked toward the passage.

“Years.”

I stared at her.

“And she never came back?”

She went unde

“Not through this entrance.”

Those words caught my attention. Caius noticed too. He moved closer to Maera.

“What does that mean?”

Maera looked toward the mountain.

“There may be another way out.”

Points

I turned toward the passage again. If Lyrienne had found another exit, she could have continued her search without returning to Frostvale. Her disappearance here didn’t prove she’d died. Vaela seemed to reach the same conclusion.

‘She survived this.’

‘You don’t know that.’

‘I feel it.’

I wanted to believe her. I had followed Lyrienne from Silvermere to Evercrest and then here. Every place had given me another piece of her journey. I wasn't stopping outside the place she'd entered.

"We're going in."

Caius looked into the passage.

"Not without knowing what's inside."

I faced him.

"How do we find out without entering?"

He knew I was right. Still, he wasn't going to lead everyone into an unknown passage without preparing. I could see him studying the entrance and the mountain around it.

Zeron moved toward the opening.

"We can check the beginning."

Raith joined him.

"See whether the passage is safe."

Caius agreed. Zeron and Raith entered only far enough to inspect what we could already see. I remained outside with Caius and watched them. Vaela stayed focused on the darkness ahead.

A few minutes later, Zeron returned.

"There's something you need to see."

I stepped toward him.

"What?"

"Your name."

I walked into the passage with Caius beside me. Zeron led us past the first turn before stopping near the wall. Another divided circle had been carved into the stone. Beneath it was one word.

Isalienne.

I touched the letters.

My mother had made it inside.

She is here

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 274

25 Fonts

She is here

(Caius)

Isla kept her fingers against the name carved into the stone. isalienne had been left here by Lyrienne, just like the other marks we'd followed. The passage continued beyond us into the mountain. We finally had proof her mother had made it this far.

"We keep going," Isla said. She looked toward the passage ahead of us. Nothing I said would convince he to turn around now. I wasn't planning to try.

I looked at Zeron and Raith. The two warriors waited near the entrance while the others remained with the vehicles. I didn't want everyone entering a place we knew nothing about. Someone needed to know where we'd gone.

"You two stay near the entrance," I told the warriors. They nodded and moved back toward the opening. If we didn't return, they knew where to start searching. Zeron and Raith would continue with us.

We moved farther into the passage. Old markings covered sections of the stone walls, though many had faded beyond recognition. Isla stayed near me while Vaela guided her forward. Vorak remained focused on something deeper inside.

'It's stronger, he said. His attention remained ahead of us. Whatever he'd sensed before reaching Frostvale hadn't disappeared. We were moving closer to it.

'Can you tell what it is?' I asked. Vorak didn't answer immediately. I felt him searching for something he understood. His uncertainty bothered me more than an answer would have.

'Power,' he finally said. I looked at Isla. Vaela appeared to be experiencing something similar. She kept glancing farther into the passage.

The path opened into a large cavern. Stone pillars surrounded an open area in the center. The divided circle had been carved into every pillar. Isla walked toward the nearest one.

“There are names,” she said. She pointed beneath the symbol. Dozens of names covered the lower part of the stone. Some were almost impossible to read.

Zeron moved toward another pillar. More names had been carved there. Several dates appeared beside them. Some went back farther than Wraithbone’s oldest records.

“Celestials?” Zeron asked. He looked toward Isla. She touched one of the names without answering. Vaela seemed to understand before any of us did.

‘They were here,’ Isla told me through our bond. Her attention moved across the cavern. Vaela says they were all here.’ She walked toward the center.

I followed her, A large circle had been carved into the floor with smaller symbols surrounding it. They were different from the divided circle we’d followed here. I recognized none of them.

“This is where they came?” Isla asked. She looked around at the names. I couldn’t give her an answer yet. There was nobody here to explain what we’d found.

She is here message had said to find where the Celestials began. This place had to be part of what she’d meant.

Raith called from the other side of the cavern. He stood near another passage that disappeared behind the pillars. A divided eircle had been carved beside it. Beneath it was another message.

For Isalienne.

Isla came toward us. Her mother’s trait hadn’t ended at the entrance. Lyrienne had continued leaving directions after coming beneath the mountain. Whatever she’d wanted Isla to find was farther inside.

“She expected me to reach this place,” Isla said. She touched the words. Her expression showed more questions than answers. I wanted Lyrienne alive to answer every one of them herself.

We entered the second passage. Unlike the first, this one showed signs that someone had used it more recently. The ground wasn’t covered completely in dirt. A few footprints remained near the wall.

Zeron crouched to examine them. He looked farther ahead before standing again. The prints weren’t centuries old. Someone had walked through here recently.

“How recent?” I asked. Zeron studied the ground again. He couldn’t give me an exact answer. But we both knew what the tracks meant.

Isla had already understood. She moved ahead before I caught her hand. I wasn't stopping her from continuing. I only wanted her beside me.

"Someone is here," she said. Her eyes went toward the passage. Vaela had become more active. I could feel her through the bond now.

"Let Vaela tell you what she feels," I said. Isla nodded and focused on her wolf. Zeron and Raith remained behind us. Nobody moved while we waited.

'Isla.' Vaela's voice reached me through our bond with Isla. Something had changed. This wasn't the same reaction she'd had to Lyrienne's marks. Vaela was responding to something happening now.

Isla looked at me. I saw the realization beginning in her face. She touched the necklace Lyrienne had left behind. Then she turned toward the passage.

'She's here, Vaela said. Isla stopped moving. Vorak came forward inside me at the same moment. This time he recognized what waited ahead.

'Celestial, Vorak said. I looked farther into the passage. He wasn't sensing an old mark or power left in the stone. There was a living Celestial somewhere ahead of us.

"Vaela says she's here," Isla said. Hier voice carried everything she'd been holding since Silvermere. Hope was there, but so was fear of believing too much. I tightened my hold on her hand.

"Then we find her," I said. Isla nodded and started forward again. We passed another divided circle and followed the passage around a turn. Light appeared farther ahead.

The passage opened into another part of the mountain. Trees grew beyond the opening, surrounded by stone walls that hid the land from outside. A small stream crossed the ground. Someone had built a home beside it.

Isla stopped beside me. Vaela pushed closer through our b

She is here eeming from somewhere near the home. We weren't following something left behind centuries ago anymore.

The door opened.

A woman stepped outside. She looked no older than thirty. Her eyes went directly to Isla.

Isla stopped breathing for a moment.

'Mother,' Vaela said.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 275

The woman I searched for

(Isla)

I couldn't move as I stared at the woman standing outside the home. She looked nothing like the mother I had imagined during the journey here because she was far too young. Dark hair fell past her back, and her eyes were the same ones I'd seen whenever I looked at my reflection. Vaela came closer inside me.

'That's her,' Vaela said. 'I know her.' I couldn't understand how she could be so certain about a woman we'd never met. Yet something inside me already believed her.

The woman remained where she was, staring at me as though she couldn't move either. Her eyes went to the necklace around my neck before returning to my face. Her hand covered her mouth.

Tears filled her eyes.

"Isalienne," she said. Her voice broke around the name. Hearing it from her was different from reading it in the book. I knew then that Vaela was right.

I took one step forward, but my legs refused to carry me any farther. Three hundred years of searching had brought Lyrienne here, while my own search had only begun weeks ago. Somehow we had ended up standing in front of each other. I didn't know what I was supposed to say. "Are you Lyrienne?" I asked. I already knew the answer, but I needed to hear it from her. The woman nodded as tears ran down her face. She didn't come closer without my permission.

"I'm Lyrienne Vale," she said. Her eyes remained on me as she lowered her hand. "And you're my daughter." The words reached somewhere inside me that nothing else had.

Vaela pushed forward with enough force that I felt her need to reach Lyrienne. I looked at Caius, and he gave me a small nod without saying anything. Zeron and Raith remained farther behind us. This moment belonged to me.

I walked toward Lyrienne. She waited until only a few steps remained between us, and I saw more of myself in her face. Her eyes were mine, and even the shape of her mouth looked familiar. I had spent twenty years without seeing myself in anyone.

“You really are my mother,” I said. Lyrienne nodded again, and another tear ran down her face. She reached toward me before stopping herself. I understood what she was asking without words.

I closed the remaining distance and wrapped my arms around her. Lyrienne held me immediately, and a broken sound escaped her. Vaela became completely silent inside me. I buried my face against the woman who had spent centuries searching for me.

The woman I searched for

“My baby,” Lyrienne whispered. Her arms remained around me as though she feared I might disappear. “You’re alive.” I closed my eyes when I heard the words.

We remained together until I finally pulled back enough to look at her. Lyrienne kept both hands on my arms while studying my face. I could see questions in her eyes, probably as many as I had for her. There would be time for all of them.

“You left the marks for me,” I said. I touched the necklace between us. “I found every one.” Lyrienne looked down at it and smiled through her tears.

“I couldn’t stop hoping,” she said. Her fingers touched the stone before falling away “Even after everyone told me you were gone, I couldn’t believe them,” She looked at my face again.

I thought about the book she’d left with Tavian. Every page had shown me how long she’d searched. Now the woman who had written those words stood in front of me. She hadn’t abandoned me.

Then another question pushed through everything else. I looked at her face again and remembered how long ago she’d disappeared. Lyrienne looked no older than Caius had described when we’d first seen her. It didn’t make sense.

“How old are you?” I asked. Lyrienne seemed to know exactly why I was asking. She glanced toward Caius before looking at me again. I waited for the answer.

“Three hundred and forty seven,” she said. I stared at her because hearing the number made her appearance even harder to understand. She looked around thirty. Nothing about her showed more than three centuries of life.

“How?” I asked. I looked at her again, searching for something I’d somehow missed. “You don’t look anywhere near that age.” Lyrienne’s expression changed.

“Neither will you,” she said. Her answer brought Vaela forward again. I looked at Caius and saw that he was listening carefully. Lyrienne had just given us another piece of what being Celestial meant.

“What does that mean?” I asked. Lyrienne looked toward the cavern entrance behind us. She seemed to understand how many answers I needed. Then she gestured toward the home.

“Come inside,” she said. She looked at Zeron and Raith before returning her attention to me. “All of you can come.” She stepped aside so we could follow.

I didn’t move immediately. There was still one question I needed answered before anything else. I had spent too long wondering why a mother who believed her daughter lived had never found Ashcrest. Lyrienne saw something in my face and waited.

woman I searched for

“Why didn’t you find me?” I asked. The question hurt more once I said it aloud. “You searched for centuries, but I was in Ashcrest.” Lyrienne’s face changed immediately.

“I did find Ashcrest,” she said. Her eyes filled again as she looked at me. “But when I reached it, you weren’t there.” I stared at her.

That couldn’t be right. Derek and Helene had raised me in Ashcrest for as long as I could remember. Yet Lyrienne wasn’t looking away or trying to avoid the question. Something was missing from the history we’d uncovered.

“When did you go there?” I asked. Lyrienne looked toward Caius before returning her attention to me. Her answer seemed to carry another truth we hadn’t discovered yet. I waited

“More than three hundred years ago,” she said. My thoughts stopped on the number. I had only lived twenty years, yet my mother claimed she’d gone looking for me in Ashcrest centuries ago. Vaela became alert again.

Lyrienne reached for my hand. This time I let her take it without hesitation. Whatever had happened to me was bigger than Corvin changing my name and leaving me with Derek and Helene. My missing years were about to become another mystery.

“You need to know what happened after Corvin took you,” Lyrienne said. She looked toward the home and then back at me. “Because you didn’t simply disappear.” I held her hand and followed her inside.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 276

The missing three hundred years

(Isla)

Lyrienne led us inside and closed the door behind Raith. The home was small, but books and old records filled several shelves along the walls. A table stood near the window with papers spread across it. My mother had clearly spent years working here.

“Sit with me,” she said.

I went to the table and took the chair beside her. Caius sat on my other side while Zeron and Rach remained nearby. I still held Lyrienne’s hand. Part of me wasn’t ready to let go.

“What happened to me?”

Lyrienne looked at our joined hands.

“Corvin took you from the wolves bringing you to Silvermere.”

I already knew that part. Mara had seen him carrying me away, and the records confirmed what she’d witnessed. Corvin had eventually taken me to Ashcrest. What happened between those moments was what nobody had explained.

“Then he left me with Derek and Helene.”

“No.”

I stared at her.

“What?”

Lyrienne looked at Caius before facing me again. Corvin had taken me to Ashcrest, but not to Derek and Helene. The couple raising a child under the Thorne name more than three hundred years ago had been different wolves.

“Then who had me?”

“A couple named Garron and Elira Thorne.”

I looked at Caius. He seemed just as surprised as I was. Derek shared their surname, which couldn’t be a coincidence. Suddenly the history of the Thorne family mattered much more.

“Were they related to Derek?”

“His ancestors.”

I pulled my hand away without meaning to. Everything I'd believed about my childhood was

The missing three hundred years beginning to change again. Derek and Helene hadn't been the wolves Corvin originally chose. M connection to the Thorne family went back centuries.

"How was I still a baby when Derek got me?"

Lyrienne looked at me.

"Because you weren't awake."

I frowned.

"What do you mean?"

Lyrienne got up and walked toward one of the shelves. She removed an old book and returned to the table. The divided circle was carved into its cover. She placed it between us.

"Celestial children are different from other wolf children."

I waited.

"Different how?"

Lyrienne opened the book. Several drawings showed infants surrounded by symbols I recognized from the cavern. Another drawing showed a stone chamber. My attention remained on it.

"Celestial blood can protect itself when the child is in danger."

"Protect itself from what?"

"Almost anything."

I looked at Caius. Vorak had become interested through our bond, and Vaela was listening to every word. Neither of them seemed surprised by what Lyrienne was explaining. Maybe Vaela already understood something I didn't.

"What happened to me?"

Lyrienne touched the drawing of the chamber.

"You were placed into a protected sleep."

I stared at the page.

“For three hundred years?”

“Almost.”

That explained something I hadn’t known how to ask. I hadn’t lived three hundred years without remembering them. I hadn’t been walking through the world while my mother searched for me. I

The missing three hundred years had been asleep somewhere.

“Who did that to me?”

“We don’t know.”

I looked at her.

“Not Corvin?”

“I don’t believe so.”

Lyrienne explained that Corvin had delivered me to the original Thorne family. Soon afterward, every record of me disappeared. When she reached Ashcrest months later, Garron and Elira had no child. They denied ever receiving one.

“You believed them?”

“No.”

I smiled despite everything. That sounded exactly like the woman whose trail I’d followed across three territories. Lyrienne had searched their land anyway. She found nothing.

“What happened to Garron and Elira?”

“They died without telling me.”

I looked at the book again. If they’d known where I was placed, they had carried the secret until their deaths. Their descendants had remained in Ashcrest. Centuries later, Derek had somehow ended up with me.

“How did I wake up?”

“That’s what I never discovered.”

I thought about my earliest memories. Derek and Helene had always been there. I couldn't remember arriving or anyone explaining where I'd come from. I had simply believed they were my parents because that was what I'd been told.

"Could Derek have found me?"

"It's possible."

Caius leaned closer to the book.

"Where would a Celestial child be kept during that sleep?"

Lyrienne turned several pages.

The missing three hundred years "Somewhere protected by old magic."

I looked at the symbols. The same markings covered the cavern we'd passed through before finding her. If someone had known enough about Celestials to place me into that sleep, Corvin's accomplice knew much more than we'd realized. This hadn't simply been an abduction.

"Could I have been here?"

"No."

I looked at Lyrienne.

"How do you know?"

"Because I would have felt you."

Vaela agreed immediately. A Celestial could recognize another Celestial nearby. That explained how she'd recognized Lyrienne before I did. Whoever hid me had chosen somewhere far from my mother.

Caius looked at Lyrienne.

"Why wake her twenty years ago?"

Lyrienne shook her head.

"I don't know."

I thought about Derek. If his ancestors had been entrusted with me, perhaps something had been passed through their family. A location, an instruction, or a secret nobody

outside their bloodline knew. Derek might have known more about me from the beginning than we'd believed.

"He lied to me my entire life."

Lyrienne reached for my hand again.

"Then we'll find out what he knew."

I let her take it. There was anger in me, but there was something else too. Three hundred missing years finally had an explanation.

"Is that why you still look young?"

"Partly."

I looked at her.

"There's more?"

The missing three hundred years

"Celestials stop aging normally once we reach adulthood."

My eyes went to Caius. Lyrienne had already told me I wouldn't look my age either. Now I understood what she'd meant.

"Do we live forever?"

"No."

I waited for her to explain.

"We can die, but time treats us differently."

Vaela seemed completely satisfied with that answer. I wasn't. There were still hundreds of questions waiting, but one mattered more than the others.

I looked at my mother.

"Who knew enough about Celestials to do this to me?"

Lyrienne's expression changed.

"That's the question I've spent three centuries trying to answer."

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 277

The line must continue

(Caius)

Pointe

Lyrienne kept her eyes on Isla after answering. Three centuries of searching had given her pieces, but never the wolf responsible for what happened. I understood that kind of frustration better than most. Every answer we'd found had uncovered another secret.

"How close did you get?" I asked.

"Close enough to know Corvin wasn't working for himself."

Isla looked at her mother. We'd reached the same conclusion in Silvermere after learning how much Corvin had known. He had access to the exact plans for Isla's journey. Someone else had given him that information.

"Did you find anyone connected to him?" Isla asked.

"Several wolves."

Lyrienne released Isla's hand and went to the shelves again. She removed a stack of papers held together with an old cord. When she returned, she placed them in front of us. Names and dates covered the first page.

"These are everyone I found who had contact with Corvin."

I moved the papers closer. Some names had notes beside them while others had been crossed out. Lyrienne had followed Corvin's movements across several territories. His work carrying messages had given him access to more wolves than we'd realized.

"Most of these wolves are dead," I said.

"All of them."

That wasn't surprising after three centuries. Whoever had started this could have died long before Isla woke. But the secrets had survived.

Isla turned another page. Her finger stopped beside a name connected to the High Council. The wolf had served there during the years before her birth. Several meetings with Corvin were recorded beside his name.

aid was born. That

The line must continue alone didn't prove he knew about the plan to take her. Still, it was enough to matter.

"What happened to him?" I asked.

"He died before I could question him."

Isla continued through the papers. There were two other Council names among them, though neither had direct meetings with Corvin recorded. Lyrienne had written questions beside both. She had clearly suspected the Council long before we did.

"Do you think Varen ordered it?" Isla asked.

"I don't know."

Lyrienne wasn't going to accuse someone without proof. I respected that. After everything she'd uncovered, she still knew the difference between suspicion and fact.

"Did the trail end with him?" I asked.

"No."

Lyrienne pulled another paper from beneath the others. It contained several family names rather than individual wolves. Some had disappeared over the centuries while others still existed. I recognized more than one.

"What are these?" Isla asked.

"The families connected to the Council members I investigated."

I looked through the list. There were territories from the north, west, and several that no longer existed. Nothing on the page told me which family mattered most. That might have been why Lyrienne had kept all of them.

"Someone continued it," Isla said.

"I believe so."

That matched what we'd already discovered. Evander couldn't have started something that happened centuries before his birth. Yet he'd known enough about Isla to order Rodan to use wolfsbane chains on her.

"Evander knew something," I said.

Lyrienne looked at me.

"Who is Evander?"

I explained who he was and what we'd discovered before leaving Wraithbone. He had used Rodan

The line must continue to keep Isla controlled in Ashcrest. When the truth came out, he'd been taken into custody. Lyrienne listened without interrupting.

"He wasn't the beginning," isla said.

"No."

Lyrienne looked through the records again. If Evander had learned about Isla through someone else, there could be a chain stretching across generations. That would explain how knowledge of Isla survived while she slept.

"We need to know who taught Evander about you," I said.

Isla nodded.

"And why they still cared after three hundred years."

That was the part that concerned me most. Hiding a Celestial child was one thing. Continuing to watch her centuries later meant whatever began with Corvin had never truly ended. Someone had been waiting for Isla to wake.

Lyrienne reached for another record. This one contained only a few lines. She pushed it toward me. A Council seal had been drawn beside the writing.

"I found this almost two hundred years ago."

I read it.

The child remains beyond reach. The line must continue until she returns.

Isla moved closer. Her eyes stayed on the words. Whoever wrote the message had expected her to return eventually. Her protected sleep hadn't been intended to last forever.

“Where did you find this?” Isla asked.

“Inside an abandoned Council residence.”

I looked at Lyrienne.

“Whose residence?”

“Varen’s.”

That brought us closer, but Varen had been dead by then. Someone had preserved the message after his death. The words about continuing the line suggested others had inherited whatever responsibility he’d carried.

“Do you know what line means?” I asked.

The line must continue

“I thought it meant a family line.”

Isla looked at the list of families again. I could see her trying to connect names separated by centuries. We needed Pryor for that. Wraithbone’s archives could tell us which of those bloodlines still existed.

“We take copies back with us,” I said.

“Take the originals.”

I looked at Lyrienne.

“You’re coming with us.”

She became still.

Isla turned toward her mother. She hadn’t asked the question yet, but I knew she wanted Lyrienne to return to Wraithbone. After finding her, leaving her here wasn’t something Isla would accept easily.

“Come home with us,” Isla said.

Lyrienne looked at her daughter. The answer seemed difficult for reasons I didn’t understand. She had spent centuries waiting for this moment.

“I can’t leave yet,” Lyrienne said.

Isla stared at her.

“Why?”

Lyrienne looked toward the mountain beyond the window. Her attention remained there for several seconds. Then she turned back to us.

“Because there is something beneath this mountain I’ve been protecting.”

I watched her carefully.

“What?”

Lyrienne looked at Isla.

“The reason Celestials began here.”

LOK DRAW >

Celestial names to reach this place. I thought that was what my mother’s message had eant. Now she was telling me there was more.

“What are you protecting?”

Lyrienne stood from the table.

“Something that belongs to

I looked at Caius before

Raith remained near

“Show me.”

Lyrienne loo

“I wa sk.”

was already watching my mother with interest. Zeron and er interrupted.

pers and placed them inside a wooden box. The records about Varen for us to take later. Then she walked toward another door near the back of d her.

d onto a narrow path. It ran behind the home and disappeared between two stone noticed it when we’d arrived. Lyrienne waited until everyone joined us.

es this go?” I asked.

r into the mountain.”

a became interested immediately. She could feel something before we had taken more than a w steps. It wasn’t Lyrienne this time. Whatever she sensed seemed to surround us.

What is that?‘ fon’t know!’

at surp hout ever seeing her. She had known beneath the mountain was unfamiliar even the path. It ended at another opening in the stone. Unlike the entrance e, symbols covered both sides. I recognized several from the cavern.

The celestial stone

“These are Celestial markings.”

Lyrienne nodded.

“Some are older than our written records.”

Caius moved closer to one of them. I watched him study the markings without touching them.

Vorak seemed interested through our bond. Whatever Vaela felt, he could feel something too.

“Who made them?” Caius asked.

“The earliest Celestials we know existed.”

I looked at Lyrienne.

“You said Celestials began here.”

She entered the passage.

“Come with me.”

We followed her inside. The passage wasn’t long, and daylight disappeared behind us as we continued. Light came from stones set into the walls. I didn’t understand how they still worked.

The passage opened into another cavern. I stopped when I saw what stood in the center. A large stone circle rose from the ground. The divided symbol covered its surface.

“What is that?”

Lyrienne came beside me.

“The Celestial Stone.”

I stared at it. Vaela moved closer, but she didn’t speak. Something about the stone seemed to have her complete attention. I walked toward it.

“What does it do?”

“It chooses.”

I stopped

“Chooses what?”

Lyrienne looked at me.

“Who carries the Celestial gift.”

I turned back toward the stone. I’d always believed Celestial wolves were simply born different. Nobody had ever suggested something chose which bloodlines carried them. That raised more

~~ visit within certain bloodlines. The stone awakened what was already there, uunt create Celestials. The gif

“Did you come here?”

“Yes.”

I looked at her.

“When?”

“When I was twenty.”

That caught my attention. I was twenty now. My mother had reached this place at the same age. wondered whether that was another reason she’d waited here.

“What happened when you touched it?”

“My wolf changed.”

Vaela moved inside me.

‘Changed how?‘

I repeated the question aloud.

“How did your wolf change?”

Lyrienne looked toward the stone.

“She became what she was meant to be.”

I thought about Vaela. She had always been different from other wolves. Her abilities continued appearing when I needed them, sometimes before either of us understood what she could do.

Maybe I hadn’t discovered everything about her yet.

“Is that why you’re protecting this place?”

“Partly.”

I looked at my mother.

“What’s the other reason?”

The celestial stone

“What do you mean?”

Lyrienne entered the chamber and went to a stone box on the lowest shelf. The divided circle covered its lid. She tried lifting it, but nothing happened.

“Every Celestial has different access.”

I walked closer.

“And you think I can open it?”

“I don’t know.”

Vaela came forward. I crouched beside the box and placed my hand over the divided circle. Something moved beneath my palm.

The lid opened.

Nobody spoke.

Inside was a book wrapped in cloth. I lifted it carefully and placed it on the floor. A name was written across the cover.

Irecognized it.

Councilor Varen.

I looked at Caius.

“We found him.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 278

The bloodline

(idla)

Casus came closer while I opened the book The pages were old, but the writing remained clear enough to read Vareris name appeared several times on the first page Lyrienne crouched beside.

Have you ever seen this book?

“No

I turned another page. There were dates from the year before I was born, along with fames I didet recognize. One appeared more often than the others. Corvin Rell.

“He knew Corvin,”

Caius looked over the page.

“More than we thought.”

I continued reading. Varen had written about meetings with Corvin and plans involving Silvermere. He knew my parents intended to send me there before I was born. There was no longer any reason to wonder whether he’d been involved.

He knew everything.”

Lyrienne moved closer.

“Keep reading.”

I turned the page. Varen wrote about the danger of allowing another Celestial to grow without control. He believed Celestials had become too powerful and that the Council had failed by allowing them to choose their own lives. My mother looked at the words with disgust.

“He was afraid of us.”

“He wasn’t the only one.”

I looked at her

“What do you mean?”

Lyrienne pointed toward the shelves. Records about wolves who feared Celestials filled an entire section Varen had inherited ideas that existed long before him. Someone had taught him to see our kind as a threat

Then this started before Varen

You‘

I looked back at the book Varen might not have created the hatred behind the plan, but he been responsible for what happened to me I needed to know how much he’d done himself. The next page gave me part of the answer

Corvin will intercept the child before Silvermere.

I stopped reading

Calus leaned closer.

“There it is.”

Anger moved through me. Varen had written it as though stealing a child was nothing more than another task. He’d known exactly what Corvin would do. My parents never had a chance to get me somewhere safe.

“He ordered Corvin to take me.”

Lyrienne stared at the page.

“I searched for proof of that for centuries.”

I reached for her hand. She had spent most of her life trying to prove what this book confirmed in a few lines. If she had been able to open the box herself, she might have known centuries ago. Instead, the record had waited for me.

“Why would it only open for me?”

Lyrienne looked at the box.

“I think Varen’s record was sealed for the Celestial he harmed.”

I frowned.

“Who sealed it?”

“I don’t know.”

That gave us another mystery, but it could wait. I wanted to finish Varen’s record. I turned the page and found another entry about Corvin. The words made me stop again.

The child must remain hidden until the bloodline is prepared.

I read it twice. Those words were too similar to the message Lyrienne had found in Varen’s old residence. The line must continue until she returns. Both had to mean something.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 279

What bloodline?”

Calus looked at Lynenne

“The Thomes?”

“Possibly

I thought about Garron and Elira Corvin had taken me to them after stealing me Their family had remained in Ashcrest for generations until Derek eventually raised me. Maybe that hadn’t happened by chance

“Could the Thornes have been waiting for me to wake?

Lyrienne considered it.

“Someone in that family may have been.”

I didn’t like the thought. Derek had treated me terribly after everyone believed I was wolfless. But there were still too many things we didn’t know about what he’d been told or what his family had passed down. We needed answers from him.

“Is Derek still alive? Lyrienne asked.

‘Yes‘

Her eyes changed.

Then I want to speak with him.”

I understood why. Derek had answers about the twenty years Lyrienne had missed. He might also know what his family had protected for centuries. Finding him wouldn’t mean starting without anything.

“He was banished from Ashcrest.”

Lyrierne looked at me.

“Do you know where he went?”

“Caius’s warriors escorted him from the territory.”

I looked at Caius. His warriors would have recorded the route they used and where Derek had been left after his banishment. Derek might have moved since then. But we had somewhere to begin looking

“We can find him.”

Caius nodded.

OTW

They will have the exile decor enak

Sked back at Varen Book Derste might have spent my entire childhood knowing more than mæthanag he’d ever admired if something had been passed through the Thorne family for generatio

Bench wanted to hear what he knew from his own mouth My mother deserved these answers too

Then we find hart when we return”

Egmenne looked at me

Twant to be there

I held her hand

“You will be

Caus reached for the book and pointed farther down the page. There was another entry beneath the one about the bloodline. I moved the book between us so we could all see it. Varen had written about the protected sleep Lyrienne explained earlier.

He knew about it.”

Lyrienne read farther.

“But he didn’t do it himself.”

Isearched the page for another name. There wasn’t one. Whoever had been responsible for placing me into that sleep had been left out of Varen’s record. I wondered whether that had been intentional.

“Who did it?”

Lyrienne looked through the next page.

“He doesn’t say,”

Even with Varer’s own record, another wolf remained hidden. I continued reading until a sentence caught my attention. Vaela came forward as soon as I reached it. I read the words again to make sure I understood them.

The Keeper will know when the child wakes.

I looked at Lyrienne.

“Keeper?”

She took the book from me.

“Not Silvermere’s Keeper.”

[!!

I remembered Elara immediately. This couldn’t have been referring to her position Whoever Lan meant had been responsible for something entirely different

“Then whose?”

Lyrienne turned several pages. Varen used the title again, but he never wrote a name. Whoever the Keeper had been, that wolf had known where I slept. They had also expected to know when I still be a Keeper now?”

d at the records.

onsibility passed through generations.”

de sense. Varen’s plan had survived his death, and the Thorne family had remained in est. There was no reason to believe the Keeper’s role had ended. Someone living now might inherited it.

need Pryor to trace these families.”

aius nodded.

“He will.”

I looked at the book agai might finally be willing role. Returning he

Lyrienne clos

“There’s aithbone’s archives, Derek, Cael, and whatever Evander e also needed to discover who had inherited the Keeper’s en more important.

do before we leave.”

her hand.

he stone.”

ard immediately. I looked toward the large stone circle outside the chamber. My ched it when she was twenty pen?”

d at me.

what

OTW

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 280

What Varla was burn to become

What Vaela was born to become

(Isla)

I looked from Lyrienne to the Celestial Stone. Vaela had gone completely quiet inside me, but I could feel how badly she wanted me to move closer. My mother still had her hand held out toward me. I placed mine in hers and stood.

“Do I just touch it?”

Lyrienne led me from the chamber.

“That’s all I did.”

I followed her toward the stone while Caius came with us. Zeron and Raith stayed near the entrance to the chamber, giving us space. The divided circle on the stone seemed larger now that I stood directly in front of it. I couldn’t stop wondering what would happen when I placed my hand against it.

‘Are you ready?’

Vaela moved closer.

‘Yes.’

Her answer came without hesitation. I wished I felt as certain as she did. Every new thing I’d learned about being Celestial had changed something I believed about myself. This could change even more.

I looked at my mother.

“Could this hurt Vaela?”

“No.”

That was enough for me. I raised my hand and placed my palm against the center of the divided circle. Nothing happened for several seconds. Then warmth spread through my fingers.

Vaela came forward with a force that made me close my eyes. could feel her more clearly than I ever had before. She wasn’t trying to take control or shift. Something inside her was opening.

‘Vaela?’

‘I’m here.’

The warmth traveled through my arm and across my body. I heard Caius say my name, but I didn’t remove my hand. Vaela wanted me to keep touching the stone. I trusted her.

Pictures appeared inside my mind. I saw wolves I’d never met standing in the same cavern. Some touched the stone alone while others stood beside their mates. Every one of them carried the same divided circle somewhere on their clothing.

‘Who are they?’

‘Celestials.

What Vaela was born to became

Iwatched une image replace another Generations passed in moments, but I somehow understood that These weren’t visions of the future. The stone was showing me what had already happened here. It remembered them.

Then everything changed. I saw a woman standing before the stone with her hand against it. Dark hair fell down her back, and I recognized her before she turned. Lyriertne.

‘Our mother.’

‘Yes.’

Another took its place, but this time I saw myself. I was standing somewhere didn’t recognize with Vaela beside me in wolf form. Her enormous body was covered in the same pale fur Caius had once described as moonlight and ash. Her silver eyes were fixed on me.

I opened my eyes.

The cavern returned around me. My hand was still against the stone. Lyrienne stood several feet away with Caius beside her. Both were watching me.

“What happened?”

I looked at my mother.

“I saw you.”

Lyrienne’s eyes widened.

“Here?”

I nodded. I told her about the other Celestials and the images the stone had shown me. Her reaction told me that hadn't happened when she touched it. Whatever Vaela had awakened was different from her mother's ability.

"What did you see when you touched it?"

"My wolf."

I waited for more.

"Only her?"

Lyrienne nodded. Her wolf had appeared before her and shown her the ability she would carry. Lyrienne could sense Celestial blood and recognize traces left behind by another Celestial. That explained part of how she'd searched for me for so long.

"But I'm seeing the past."

"You're seeing what the stone remembers."

I looked at the divided circle beneath my hand. That meant the images weren't coming from Vaela alone. She was somehow reaching into memories held by the stone. My thoughts immediately returned to Varen.

'Can we see him?'

What Vaela was born to become

Vaela understood.

Try!

Cher

I closed my eyes again and thought about Councilor Varen. At first, there was nothing. Then the cavern disappeared.

A man stood in front of the Celestial Stone. I knew him from the drawings in his record. Varen looked younger than he'd appeared in those pages, but there was no mistaking him. Another man stood beside him.

I tried to see the second man's face. The image changed before I could. Varen was somewhere else now, speaking to Corvin. I couldn't hear what they were saying.

Let hear them.'

en.”

broke apart. I opened my eyes and pulled my hand from the stone. Caius caught my arm when I back.

id you see?”

eryone became focused on me. I explained that he’d been here and that another man had stood beside im. I hadn’t seen enough to identify the other wolf. Lyrienne looked toward the stone.

“Varen came here?”

“He did.”

My mother looked troubled. Varen shouldn’t have known how to reach this place. Frostvale had protected the entrance for generations. Somehow he’d found it.

Caius looked at me.

“Can you see more?”

“I don’t know.”

I placed my hand against the stone again. Vaela was ready this time. Instead of waiting for the stone to choose what to show us, I focused on Varen. The image returned.

He stood inside the cavern again. The other man was beside him. I concentrated on his face, but the memory wouldn’t give it to me..

Then I noticed what he was holding. A book rested in his hands. The same divided circle covered its front.

‘Look at the book.’

‘I see it.’

Varen reache their disag re he could touch it. I couldn’t hear their words, but

What Vaela-was born to become saw a child.

My breath caught.

The baby was lying inside a stone chamber surrounded by the same symbols Lyrienne had shown me earlier. Someone stood beside it. I knew immediately who the child was.

‘Me.’

Vaela came closer.

‘Us.’

I tried to see the wolf standing beside the chamber. A dark covering hid most of the person’s face. The memory began disappearing before I could find anything else. I fought to hold onto it.

One thing remained.

A symbol was somewhere into the wall behind the hidden wolf. It wasn’t the divided circle. I had seen it couldn’t remember where. Then the vision disappeared completely.

I pulled

Cai side me.

they kept me.”

ame closer. I told them about the stone chamber and the wolf whose face I couldn’t see. Then I d the symbol behind them. Caius’s expression changed.

ecognize it?”

ybe.”

e looked toward Zeron.

“Pryor has records of old Council seals.”

I understood immediately. If the symbol belonged to the Council, we might finally have something that connected the wolf who placed me into that sleep to Varen. We wouldn’t have to depend on a name that had never been written down. I looked back at the Celestial Stone.

Vaela moved inside me again.

‘There’s more.

I kept my eyes

‘I know.

Lyrienn

“What did Vaela become?”

I finally understood the answer.

“She remembers what others tried to hide.”

ATY

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 281

The stone remembers

The stone remembers

(Isla)

Lyrienne stared at me after t answered. Her eyes moved toward the Celestial Stone as though she was seeing it differently now. Caius remained beside me while Vaela stayed close inside me. I could still feel the memories waiting beneath my hand.

“Has another Celestial had this ability?”

Lyrienne thought about it.

“Not one I’ve known.”

I looked toward the chamber filled with records. If Celestials had written about their abilities for generations, there might be someone like Vaela among them. We couldn’t search hundreds of records now. Pryor could help once we returned to Wraithbone.

“Cam Vaela see memories anywhere?”

“I don’t know.”

Lyrienne came closer to the stone. She placed her hand against it, but nothing happened that I could see. Her wolf had already received what the stone had meant to show her years ago. My connection to it seemed different.

“Try touching something else.”

I understood what she meant. If Vaela could only see memories held by the Celestial Stone, her gift would be useful here but nowhere else. If she could reach memories through other things, everything changed. I looked around the cavern.

Caius took Varen's book from the chamber. He brought it toward me and held it out. I had already touched the book earlier without seeing anything. Maybe I hadn't known what Vaela could do then.

"Try this."

I accepted it from him. Nothing happened at first, and I wondered whether Lyrienne's idea had been wrong. Then Vaela moved inside me. My fingers became warm against the cover.

'Do you feel something?'

'Yes.'

I closed my eyes. The cavern disappeared again, but the memory was different from the ones the stone had shown me. Varen sat behind a large desk with the book open in front of him. Corvin stood across from him.

I tried to hear them. Their mouths moved, but there was still no sound. Vaela pushed harder, and the image became clearer. I could see a paper lying beside Varen's hand.

'Look at it.'

The stone remembers focused on the paper. Several names had been written across it, but most disappeared before I could read them. Oné remained long enough for me to recognize it. Garron Thorne.

My eyes opened.

"It works."

Caius moved closer.

"What did you see?"

I told him about Varen and Corvin. Then I explained that Garron's name had been written on a paper beside them. Lyrienne's face changed when I mentioned him. We finally had something connecting the original Thorne directly to Varen.

"Garron knew Varen."

"Or Varen knew him."

Caius was right. The memory didn't prove Garron had willingly helped him. We needed to be careful about deciding what the image meant. Vaela could show me what happened, but she couldn't explain everything around it.

I looked at Varen's book again.

"Can we try once more?"

Lyrienne nodded.

"Don't force Vaela."

I understood. Vaela had already gone through more than either of us expected when we entered this cavern. I wouldn't push her simply because I wanted answers. I waited for her to decide.

'Again?'

'Again.'

I closed my eyes with both hands around the book. Varen appeared behind the desk again. This time Corvin wasn't there. Another wolf stood across from him.

I couldn't see his face. He remained turned away from me while Varen wrote something in the book. Then Varen pushed a small object across the desk.

'What is it?"

Vaela focused with me.

'A seal.'

The other wolf picked it up. I tried to see the marking before his hand closed around it. For one moment, the symbol appeared. It was the same one I'd seen behind the chamber where I'd been kept.

ened my eyes.

"The symbol."

Caius watched me.

"What about it?"

"The other wolf had it."

That mattered. The symbol hadn't simply been carved somewhere near the chamber. Someone working with Varen had carried the same mark. If Pryor identified it, we'd have another path to follow.

Lyrienne took the book when I offered it to her. I could feel Vaela becoming tired now. Her ability might have limits we didn't understand yet. I wasn't going to test them today.

"We should stop."

I nodded.

"Vaela needs rest."

Caius took my hand and led me away from the stone. Zeron and Raith had remained nearby throughout everything. Both had heard enough to understand what we'd found. We had more information to take home than we'd expected.

My mother returned Varen's book to the chamber. I watched her place it inside the stone box before closing the lid. This time it closed without resisting her. The record had given me what I needed for now.

"Are we leaving it?"

"It's safer here."

I agreed. We could take copies of the important pages before leaving Frostvale. The original belonged with the other Celestial records. I didn't want Varen's book disappearing after surviving this long.

We returned to Lyrienne's home. I touched the necklace around my neck while we walked. Earlier today, I'd been following marks hoping my mother might still be alive. Now I was walking beside her.

Lyrienne looked at me.

"You need food and rest."

I smiled.

"That sounds like a mother."

She smiled back. I liked seeing it more than I expected. Three centuries had been stolen from us, but ! didn't want every moment we had now to be about Varen and Corvin.

Calus came beside me as we reached the home. We still needed to decide when we would return to Wraithbone. Pryor had the Council records we needed, and Derek might be the next person who could answer questions about my past. But I wasn't ready to leave Frostvale immediately.

I looked at my mother.

"I wish you were coming back with us."

The stone remembers

Lyrienne took my hand.

"Now that I know where you are, you won't lose mne again."

Claire

I looked at her. After spending so long wondering whether she was even alive, those words meant more than I could explain. I held her hand and wished we had more time before I had to leave.

"I'll come find you when I'm done here, she said.

"I'll be waiting."

Caius came beside me. We still had things to finish before leaving Frostvale, and there were answers waiting for us in Wraithbone. Pryor had the Council records we needed, and Derek might know what his family had carried through generations.

Vaela rested inside me.

We had found our mother. This time, saying goodbye wouldn't mean losing her.

CHAMPIN

Lady Dhampir

Jenny Fox | Completed

Will she choose love or power? A

Dhampir's fate unfolds.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 282

Today belonged to them

Today belonged to them

(Caius)

I watched Isla and Lyrienne walk into the home together. Neither released the other's hand until they reached the table, and I understood why Isla wasn't ready to leave yet. She had spent weeks searching for a woman who had spent centuries searching for her. They deserved more than a few hours together.

Zeron stopped beside me.

"When are we leaving?"

"Not today."

He looked toward the home.

"Tomorrow?"

I considered everything waiting for us in Wraithbone. Pryor needed to see what we'd found, and we needed the records from Derek's exile. None of it required taking Isla away from her mother immediately. One more day here wouldn't hurt us.

"We'll leave tomorrow."

Zeron nodded.

"I'll tell Raith."

He walked away to find him. The warriors still waited on the other side of the mountain, and someone would need to return to them before it got too late. We had enough supplies to remain here. Frostvale had given us no reason to expect trouble.

I entered the home and found Isla sitting beside Lyrienne. Varen's records were no longer between them. Instead, Lyrienne had brought out another book. Isla looked up when I approached.

"What's that?"

Lyrienne opened it.

"Something I kept from before you were born."

I pulled out the chair beside Isla. The first page held a drawing of a man and woman standing beside a river. The man had one hand resting against the woman's stomach. Isla recognized them immediately.

"My parents."

Lyrienne smiled.

"Your father insisted we have this made."

Isla touched the page. Darius looked younger than the drawings we'd found in Silvermere. Lyrienne looked much as she did now. Isla spent several seconds studying her father's face.

"He looks happy."

"He was."

Clesta

Lyrienne turned another page. Several entries had been written beside smaller drawings. One showed Darius standing beside the river with pieces of wood around him. Another showed something only partly built.

"What was he making?"

"A cradle."

Isla looked closer.

"He made it himself?"

Lyrienne nodded. Darius had refused every offer of help because he wanted to make something for his daughter with his own hands. He'd spent weeks working on it near their home in Silvermere. According to Lyrienne, he'd complained about it nearly every day.

"Was he bad at it?"

"Terrible at first."

Isla laughed cradle. Sn

I sat b past to her before turning another page. The next drawing showed the completed Ives had been carved into the wood.

nem. Isla had spent so much of this journey learning about the worst parts of her ek, and the Council had taken over almost every conversation. She needed this s.”

nake?”

er about small wooden animals Darius had carved while waiting for her birth. He’d made a a fox, and several others that Lyrienne couldn’t remember. He’d planned to add more as Isla re they?”

know.”

looked down at the drawings. Some might still be somewhere in Silvermere. Others could have sappeared during the centuries that followed. I already knew Isla would want to search for them.

We can look when we return.”

Isla looked at me.

“I want to.”

Lyrienne continued throu teach his daughter firs

“He wanted to te described Darius trying to decide what he would ienne had disagreed.

Today belong to them

“Before you could walk, apparently.

Clees tsla laughed again. The sound filled the small home, and I found myself smiling. Darius had never been able to raise his daughter, but Isla was finally getting to know the man he’d been.

Raith appeared near the doorway. He looked toward me without interrupting them. I stood and went outside with him. Zeron was already near the stream.

“Two warriors are returning to the vehicles.”

“Good.”

Raith looked toward the home.

“We’re staying

“Until tomo

He nodd

Isla a eeded to cross the mountain before reaching the vehicles. Leaving now would take ne only hours after finding her.

a had moved farther through the book. A drawing of Silvermere's river filled one page. maller drawing of a young tree.

ched the drawing.

er planted it for you."

ed at her.

r the river."

rienne explained that Darius had planted it after learning she was carrying a daughter. He'd wanted isla grow alongside it. Every year, he planned to mark her height against its trunk.

Isla became quiet.

"Do you think it's still there?"

"I hope so."

I remembered the river in Silvermere. There were trees everywhere, some old enough to have survived centuries. Finding one type of tree wouldn't be easy.

"We'll ask Elara."

Isla nodded.

"She might kn

Lyrienne g rather than drawings. Isla read several lines

Today belongent to them before looking at her mother. Her expression changed into another smile.

"He talked to me?"

"Constantly."

Ctains

Darius had spoken to Isla before she was born as though she could understand every word. He told her about Silvermere, the river, and the wolves waiting to meet her. Sometimes he told her about things he'd done during the day.

"What did you do while he talked?"

"Usually told him you couldn't answer."

Isla laughed.

"He probably ignored you."

"Every time."

I listened while record woul

Eventual

"I wa er more. These were things no archive could have given Isla. No Council us behaved while waiting for his daughter. Only Lyrienne could give her that.

he book.

it toward her.

Du."

up the book and held it against her. She already carried Lyrienne's journal and the necklace nd along the way. This was different from both.

you."

enne reached for her hand.

You don't have to thank me."

I stood and gave them some time together. There were still things I needed to discuss with Zeron before we left tomorrow. Isla didn't need me sitting beside her for every moment with her mother.

Outside, Zeron had Tavian's map open.

"We return through Eve

"Yes,"

He pointed

“We can

Today belonged to them

That would give us enough time to cover part of the journey afterward. I didn’t want to rush Isla in the morning. She would decide when she was ready to say goodbye.

“And when we reach Wraithbone?”

“Pryor starts with the seal.

After that, we’

removed fro

“Then C

Claim ek’s exile records. My warriors had documented where he was taken after being

If he’d moved since then, we’d begin there and track him.

“Yes given us one connection to the past. Now we had Garron Thorne’s name tied to Varen hose identity remained hidden. I wanted every piece together before we made another ough the window toward Isla. She and Lyrienne had opened the book again. Whatever waited raithbone could wait until tomorrow.

elonged to them.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 283

The things heteft for me.

The things he left for me

(Isla)

I stayed beside my mother tong after Caius went outside. The book remained open between us, and I kept finding little things I wanted to ask about. Every page gave me something about my parents that no record had ever shown me. I wasn’t ready to close it yet.

“Did Father always want children?”

Lyrienne smiled.

“More than I did at first.”

I looked at her in surprise. From everything she’d told me, I had imagined both of them waiting impatiently for a child. Apparently Darius had started talking about children long before my mother was ready. I wanted to know more.

“How long did you make him wait?”

“Long enough for him to complain about it.”

I laughed. It was strange hearing stories about my father that made him feel like someone I could have known. Until Silvermere, Darius had been nothing more than a name I didn’t know belonged to me. Now I could imagine him teasing my mother and making things for me.

Lyrienne reached across the table and touched my hand. She looked at me for a moment without speaking. There were still three centuries between the daughter she’d lost and the woman sitting beside her. Neither of us could change that.

“I wish he could see you.”

I looked down at our hands.

“I wish I could’ve met him.”

Lyrienne’s fingers closed around mine. She told me Darius, would have been proud of the woman I’d become. I wanted to believe her. Part of me wondered what he would think about everything that had happened to me.

“Would he have liked Caius?”

Lyrienne laughed.

“Eventually.”

I smiled and looked toward the window. Caius was outside talking with Zeron near the stream. I could imagine my father making things difficult for him. Something about that thought made me wish even more that Darius was here.

“What would he have done?”

“He would have questioned him for hours.”

Haughed again. Caíus probably would have stood there answering every question until Darius ran out of Them. Knowing Caius, he might even have enjoyed proving himself. My father wouldn't have frightened him away.

Lyrienne turned another page in the book. There was a drawing of Darius holding a tiny piece of clothing between two fingers. His expression looked confused. I pointed at it.

"What happened there?"

"He bought the wrong size."

I covered my mouth as I laughed. Lyrienne explained that Darius had returned with clothes meant for a much older child because he'd refused to ask anyone for help. He'd insisted I would eventually grow into them. My mother had kept some for years.

"Do you still have them?"

"No."

I could hear the regret in her answer. She'd lost more than her daughter when everything fell apart. The home she'd shared with Darius and most of what they'd collected for me were gone. I didn't want her thinking about that now.

I closed the book carefully. There would be time to read it again after I returned to Wraithbone. I wanted to remember this day for more than what we'd learned about Varen. Finding my mother mattered more.

"Tell me something about you."

Lyrienne looked surprised.

"Me?"

I nodded. Most of what she'd told me had been about Darius or the years she'd spent searching. I wanted to know who my mother had been before Corvin took me. I wanted something that belonged only to her.

She thought for a moment.

"I hated hunting."

I stared at her.

"You're a wolf."

"So are you."

I laughed. She told me Darius had never understood it either. Lyrienne could hunt when necessary, but she preferred fishing and had always complained when Darius tried to convince her otherwise. Vaela seemed, interested in that.

‘I like hunting!’

‘I know

Vaela had become quieter since we left the Celestial Stone. She was tired but still listening. I wondered what Lyrienne’s wolf was doing while we talked.

The things hetett for me

“What’s your wolf’s name?”

“Seraya.”

I repeated it to myself Vaela moved inside me immediately. She had recognized Lyrienne before I’d even known the woman standing in front of me was my mother.

“Can Vaela speak to her?”

“Eventually.”

That interested me. Lyrienne explained that Celestial wolves sometimes recognized blood connections differently from ordinary wolves. Vaela and Seraya already knew they were connected even without speaking directly. Their wolves didn’t need introductions the way we did.

‘Seraya knows me?’

‘She does.’

I smiled. Vaela seemed satisfied by that answer. There was still so much about Celestial wolves neither of us understood. At least now we had someone who could teach us.

The door opened and Caius came inside. He looked between us before coming toward the table. I could tell he’d been giving us time alone on purpose. I appreciated him even more for it.

“Everything ready?”

“For tomorrow.”

I nodded. The thought of leaving made something inside me hurt, but it wasn’t the same as before. I knew where Lyrienne was now. More importantly, she knew where I was.

My mother stood and began preparing something for us to eat. I joined her without asking. We talked while we worked, mostly about small things. I found myself wishing I'd grown up doing this with her.

Later, Caius sat beside me again. Lyrienne remained across from us while Zeron and Raith joined us at the table. For a while, nobody mentioned Varen, Corvin, the Keeper, or the Council. I was grateful.

After we ate, Lyrienne brought me another small box. I looked iat her before opening it. Inside was a carved wooden wolf. One of its ears was slightly uneven.

"Your father made that."

I picked it up carefully.

"This was mine?"

"It was waiting for you."

I ran my fingers over the carving. Darius had made it before I was born, expecting to place it in the hands of his daughter someday. Three centuries later, it had finally reached me. I held it against my palm.

"I'm taking this too."

Lyrienne smiled.

The things befeft for me hoped you would."

I placed the wooden wolf beside the book. Tomorrow I would leave Frostvale with more than answers about my past. I would carry things my parents had chosen for me before anyone knew how much would be taken from us.

looked at my mother across the table. Saying goodbye tomorrow wouldn't be easy. But it wouldn't be the end this time.

I knew where she was.

And she knew where to find me.

Run, Sierra! The Alpha King is your second chance at love

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 284

Until we meet again

Until we meet again

(Caius)

Morning came sooner than wanted it to. Isla had spent most of yesterday with Lyrienne, and I had stayed out of their way whenever I could. We needed to return to Wraithbone, but I knew leaving Frostvale would be difficult for her. I wasn't going to rush her through it.

I found Zeron and Raith outside with our things already packed. The warriors who had returned to the vehicles yesterday would be waiting for us at the mountain crossing. We only needed to gather what Isla was taking with her. After that, we could start back.

"Everything ready?" I asked.

Zeron nodded.

"Whenever you are."

I locked toward Lyrienne's home. Isla was still inside with her mother, and I wasn't going to decide when their time was finished. We could afford to wait another hour if she needed it. Wraithbone would still be there when we arrived.

"Then we wait for Isla."

Raith looked toward the mountain.

"I'll check the path."

He left while Zeron remained with me, Neither of us needed to discuss what waited once we returned. Pryor would begin working the moment we placed the information in front of him. I expected several long days in the archives.

The door opened behind us. Isla stepped outside carrying her bag, and Lyrienne followed her. The book Darius had made was inside the bag along with the wooden wolf. The necklace remained around Isla's neck.

"Ready?" I asked.

Isla looked back at her mother.

"As much as I can be."

I understood. Finding Lyrienne had answered one of the biggest questions Isla carried, but leaving her so soon wasn't easy. At least this goodbye wasn't filled with uncertainty. They knew they would see each other again.

Lyrienne walked with us toward the passage. She had prepared copies of the pages we needed from Varen's book before we left. They were packed with the other records we'd collected. The original remained protected beneath the mountain.

*You have everything?" Lyrienne asked.

Isla touched her bag.

checked three times."

Lyrienne smiled. They had already begun acting like mother and daughter in small ways. Watching them made me think about everything Varen had taken from them. Three centuries couldn't be returned, but he hadn't managed to erase what connected them.

We reached the entrance to the passage. Lyrienne stopped there. I understood immediately that this was where she intended to say goodbye. Isla stopped beside her.

"I don't want this to feel like goodbye."

Lyrienne took both of her hands.

"Then don't call it that."

Isla looked at her mother for several seconds. Vaela was close enough that I could feel her through our bond. She understood what this meant too. Lyrienne wasn't disappearing again.

"I'll see you soon."

Lyrienne smiled.

"You wi!!!"

Isla hugged her. Lyrienne wrapped both arms around her daughter and held her close. I turned away enough to give them what privacy I could. Zeron did the same.

When Isla finally stepped back, her eyes were wet. Lyrienne touched her face before letting her go. Neither of them needed to say anything else. They had already made their promise.

Isla came to me. I held out my hand, and she took it/Lyrienne remained near the entrance as we started into the passage. Isla looked back more than once,

“She’s still there,” Isla said.

I glanced behind us.

“She’ll stay until she can’t see you.”

Isla smiled at that. We continued until the passage curved and Lyrienne disappeared from view. Isla stopped for a moment. I waited beside her.

‘She’s okay, Isla told me through our bond.

‘Vaela can still feel her?”

‘Yes’

That seemed to help. Isla started walking again without looking back. We passed through the cavern she’d touched the Celestial Stone. This time she didn’t stop.

d the larger cavern with the names carved into the pillars. Isla looked at them as we passed.

Celestials had stood here before her. Now she knew she belonged among them.

Vaela will be able to see more when we return?”

Until we musetagain

Probably

Isla looked toward me.

“I want to understand what she can do first.”

I agreed. Her ability had already taken a lot from Vaela after only a few attempts. We didn’t know what would happen if Isla pushed beyond what her wolf could manage. Answers weren’t worth hurting either of them.

Raith was waiting near the outer entrance. He joined us when we reached him. The path ahead was clear, and the warriors at the vehicles had reported nothing unusual. We began the walk across the mountain.

Isla remained beside me. She didn’t speak much during the first part of the journey. I knew better than to fill the silence simply because it was there. She had enough to think about.

After some time, she reached into her bag. She pulled out the wooden wolf Darius had made. The uneven ear made her smile again. I watched her turn it in her hand.

“I wish I knew him.”

I looked at her.

“You know more about him now.”

She nodded. It wasn’t the same as having Darius in her life, and neither of us pretended it was. But Lyrienne had given Isla memories she could carry even though they weren’t her own. Darius was no longer only a name in an old record.

We reached the vehicles before midday. The two warriors waiting there came forward as soon as they saw us. Everything was exactly as we’d left it. Within minutes, our supplies were loaded.

Zeron walked over while I checked Tavian’s map.

“Straight to Wraithbone?”

“Yes.”

He returned to the second vehicle. Raith joined him while the warriors divided between us, isla climbed into the passenger seat and placed her bag near her feet.

I started the vehicle. We had a long journey ahead of us, but every mile would bring us closer to the answers waiting at home. Pryor had records to search, and Derek’s exile documents would give us somewhere to begin. The old Council seal could lead us to the Keeper.

Isla looked back toward the mountain. Frostvale disappeared behind the trees as we followed the road away. She touched the necklace around her neck. Then she turned forward again.

“We found her

I looked at her.

“We did.”

Her hand found mine between us. We still had Varen’s secrets to uncover and a man from Isla’s past to find. Somewhere in the Council records was a symbol that could tell us who had known where she slept. For now, none of that changed what we’d accomplished.

Isla had found her mother.

And this time, nobody could take her away from her.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 285

The keeper’s mark

The keeper’s mark

(Isla)

Claire

Wraithbone came into view after hours on the road. I hadn’t realized how much I missed it until I saw the familiar land ahead. Frostvale had given me my mother and answers I never expected to find. Still, returning here felt good.

Caius glanced at me.

“Happy to be back?”

“Very.”

He continued toward the pack house. Zeron and Raith followed behind us with the warriors. Wolves noticed our return as we crossed the grounds. Several stopped what they were doing to watch us arrive.

I reached for my bag before Caius could take it. Lyrienne’s book was inside with the wooden wolf Darius had made for me. I had checked both several times during the journey. They were pieces of the life my parents had planned for me.

Sera came outside before we reached the steps. Pryor and Lira followed behind her, but Sera was already coming toward us. Her face changed when she saw me, and I smiled. I had missed her.

She stopped in front of Caius first.

“Welcome back, Alpha King.”

Caius nodded.

“It’s good to be back.”

Sera turned to me and wrapped her arms around me. I hugged her back immediately. Seeing her again made being home feel real. When she released me, she noticed my necklace.

“That’s new.”

“It belonged to my mother.”

Sera stared at me. Her eyes widened as she understood what I’d said. She knew we’d left Wraithbone looking for answers about my past. I smiled before she could ask.

“You found her?”

“Alive.”

Sera hugged me again. I laughed and held her for a moment. There would be time to tell her everything later. Right now, her happiness was enough.

Pryor came closer after Sera released me. His attention moved between Caius and me. Lira remained beside him with several papers in her hands. They had clearly been working before we arrived.

“You found something.”

“Several things.”

tap

Caius looked toward the pack house. There was too much to explain while everyone stood outside. What we’d discovered about Varen needed Pryor’s help. We also needed to discuss Derek.

“Meet us in the council room in thirty minutes.”

Pryor nodded.

“I’ll have the records ready.”

Lira followed him inside. Caius reached for my bag, and I moved it away from him. He gave me a look. I already knew what was coming.

“I can carry it.”

“I know.”

He took it anyway. Sera smiled at us before leaving. I followed Caius inside without arguing. Some things hadn't changed while we were gone.

The familiar halls felt good after so much traveling. I'd left Wraithbone searching for answers about my mother. I'd returned knowing her face, her wolf, and where she was. Vaela was pleased too.

'We found Seraya.'

'You knew before I did.'

'Of course.'

I smiled. Vaela was tired from using her new ability, but she felt better than she had beneath the mountain. I wanted her rested before we tried anything else. We still didn't understand everything her gift could do.

Caius carried my bag to our quarters. I placed Lyrienne's book somewhere safe and set the wooden wolf beside it. Seeing them here made me stop. Yesterday they had still been with my mother.

Caius noticed.

"You okay?"

"Yes."

I picked up the wooden wolf, its uneven ear made me think about Darius trying to carve it before I was born. Lyrienne had laughed while telling me about everything he'd made for me. I wished I had memories of him instead of stories.

"We'll find the tree too."

I looked at Caius.

"You remembered."

He came closer.

"I remember what matters to you."

put the wolf down. There would be time to return to Silvermere and search for the tree Darius planted. Right now, Varen and the Keeper needed our attention. Derek did too.

A knock came at the door. Zeron stood outside when Caius opened it. Pryor had already gathered several old Council records. Apparently, he hadn't planned to waste any of the thirty minutes.

"We might as well go."

Caius looked at me.

"You need rest."

"I salt in a vehicle most of the day."

He knew I wasn't changing my mind. I wanted to hear what Pryor found. We left together. Zeron followed us toward the council room.

Pryor had covered the table with records by the time we entered. Lira stood beside him while Raith had already taken a seat. Sera was there too. I sat beside Caius.

"Tell me what you found in Frostvale."

I looked at Pryor.

"I found my mother."

He stared at me.

"Your mother is alive?"

"Yes."

Sera smiled from across the table. She had managed to keep the news to herself long enough for me to tell Pryor. His surprise told me he hadn't expected our journey to end with anything this big.

I told them about Lyrienne and how she'd spent centuries searching for me. Then I explained what we'd. discovered beneath the mountain. Varen had been connected directly to Corvin. Garron Thorne's naine had appeared in one of the memories Vaela showed me.

"The Keeper will know when the child wakes."

Pryor looked at the copied page.

"Varen wrote this?"

"Yes."

I told him about Vaels's new ability. The Celestial Stone had shown me where I'd been kept during my protected sleep. A hidden wolf had stood beside the chamber. A symbol had been carved into the wall behind them.

"You saw it clearly?"

"Clearly enough to recognize it."

The keeper's mark

Pryor reached for a book containing old Council seals. He opened it and began turning the pages. I watched every symbol. Nothing looked familiar at first.

Then Vaela moved inside me.

'Wait.'

"Stop."

Pryor stopped. A circle surrounded three narrow lines with a small mark through the center. I remembered seeing it behind the chamber. Vaela recognized it too.

"That one."

Pryor read the information beside it. His expression changed before he looked at Caius. Whatever he'd found wasn't something he expected. Caius leaned closer.

"Who did it belong to?"

"An old Council order."

I looked at Pryor.

"What order?"

He continued reading. The order had been responsible for protecting restricted Council knowledge. Membership passed through chosen families instead of elected positions. Most records about them had disappeared centuries ago.

Pryor looked up.

"The Keepers."

I stared at the symbol again. Varen hadn't been referring to one wolf whose secret died with him. He'd been referring to something that could have survived for generations. Someone could still carry that responsibility now.

Caius looked at Pryor.

“Find the families.”

Pryor gathered several records.

“I’ll start tonight.”

I remembered the other person we needed.

“And Derek’s exile records.”

Pryor stopped.

“Derek Thorne?”

“Yes.”

He nodded and reached for another record. My connection to the Thorne family had begun centuries before Derek raised me. If something had been passed through his family, Derek might know more than he’d ever admitted.

Caius took my hand beneath the table. We finally knew what Pryor needed to search for. One path led to the Keepers, while the other ted back to Derek. Both could bring us closer to the truth.

This time, we knew where to begin.

princess jody

Sorry for the late updates. I am moving into my new apartment and haven’t settled down as yet, I have been so busy

Clash

The road to Derek

(Isla)

Pryor pulled the exile record closer and opened it. Several pages had been added after Derek was removed from Ashcrest. Caius’s warriors had recorded every part of the escort. I moved closer to read with him.

“Where did they take him?”

Pryor turned to the final page.

“Greyhaven.”

I looked at Caius. I didn’t recognize the name, but he clearly did. His attention remained on the record. Zeron moved closer to the table.

“What is Greyhaven?”

“A small territory west of Ashcrest.”

Caius took the record from Pryor. Wolves without a pack sometimes passed through Greyhaven because its Alpha aliewed them to remain for short periods. Derek had been left near its eastern border. Whether he had stayed there was another question.

“How long ago was this recorded?”

Pryor checked the date.

“The day of his exile.”

That meant we had no record of where Derek went afterward. Still, it was better than searching without somewhere to begin. If he’d entered Greyhaven, someone might remember him. Derek hadn’t exactly left Ashcrest under normal circumstances.

Caius looked at Zeron.

“Send two warriors.”

Zeron nodded.

“To Greyhaven?”

“Find out whether Derek entered the territory after he was left there.”

Zeron left the council room. I looked down at the record again. Part of me wanted to go myself, but traveling there without knowing whether Derek remained nearby would waste time. We needed confirmation first.

Pryor returned his attention to the Keeper records. Lira brought another book from the end of the table and placed it beside him. Several family names were listed beneath the old Council order Most meant nothing to me.

“These are the families?”

The road to Betek

“Some of them.”

Pryor traced the list with his finger. The Keeper order had existed for centuries before disappearing from official Council records Members weren't chosen because of rank. Their responsibility passed from one generation to another.

"Why would the Council remove them from the records?"

Pryor looked at the dates!

"I don't think the entire Council did."

That caught Caius's attention. Pryor showed us where references to the Keepers suddenly stopped. Older records spoke about them openly. Then their name disappeared.

"Someone hid them."

"That's what it looks like."

I thought about the seven missing letters Pryor had discovered before we left Wraithbone. Someone had already removed records connected to my history. Now we had another group disappearing from Council documents. Too much had been hidden for it to be chance.

"Do any of the families still exist?"

Pryor began checking another record.

"I need time."

I nodded. I didn't expect him to trace centuries of families while we sat there. Some names would have changed through mating or disappeared completely,/Others might still be connected to wolves we knew.

Sera touched my arm.

"You should rest."

I looked at her.

"I'm fine."

She gave me the same look she usually gave when she didn't believe me. I had spent days traveling through territories and mountains before finally reaching Frostvale. Then Vaela had used an ability neither of us understood. Sera had a point.

"Vaela needs it too."

That convinced me more than anything else. Vaela had been quiet throughout most of the meeting. She wasn't hurt, but I could feel her tiredness. I wasn't going to ignore what she needed.

"We'll stop for tonight."

Calus looked at Pryor.

"Bring me anything important."

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 286

Pryor nodded and returned to the records. Lira remained with him to help. Raith left with us while Sera Tollowed me into the hall. Caius stopped to speak with him before joining us.

Sera looked at my necklace again.

"Your mother gave you that?"

"She left it for me."

I told her how we'd found it hidden along the path before reaching Frostvale. Lyrienne had left marks hoping I might someday follow them. She'd never stopped believing I was alive. Saying it still made something move inside me.

"What's she like?"

I smiled.

"I don't know yet."

Clayer

That was the truth. I'd learned pieces of my mother during the short time we'd spent together. I knew she hated hunting and preferred fishing. I knew her wolf was Seraya, but there was still an entire person left for me to know.

Sera smiled.

"You have time now."

“I do.”

That was what mattered. Lyrienne knew where I lived, and I knew where she was. Once she’d finished protecting the Celestial records, she would come to Wraithbone. We wouldn’t lose another three hundred years.

Caius joined us before we reached our quarters. Sera said goodnight and continued down the hall. I entered with Caius and went directly toward the wooden wolf. Seeing it made me think of Darius again.

Caius came beside me.

“You miss her already.”

“Is it strange that I do?”

He shook his head. I had only known Lyrienne for a short time, but she was my mother. Three centuries had already been taken from us. Warting more time with her didn’t seem unreasonable.

I picked up the wooden wolf.

“I keep thinking about Derek.”

Caius watched me.

“What about him?”

I wondered how much Derek had known when I was growing up. Had he known Garron Thome once received a stolen Celestial child? Had someone told him where I had been sleeping? There was one question couldn’t stop asking myself.

~”Why me?”

Caius frowned.

“What do you mean?”

“Why did I end up with Derek?”

Clapt

If the Thorne family had guarded a secret for generations, my appearance in Derek’s life couldn’t simply be chance. Someone had either led him to me or told him where to find me. Derek might have known the truth from the beginning.

Vaela moved inside me.

‘He knows something.’

I looked toward the door. Two warriors were already heading for Greyhaven. If Derek had remained anywhere near where Caius’s men left him, we’d know soon.

And this time, I would be the one asking the questions.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 287

The Greyhaverflead

The Greyhaven lead

(Isla)

Morning came with Derek already on my mind. I dressed while Caius finished reading a message that ha arrived from Zeron. We had spent enough time wondering what Derek might know. I wanted something v could act on.

“What did Zeron say?”

Caius folded the message.

“The warriors reached Greyhaven.”

I looked at him.

“And?”

“They confirmed Derek entered the territory after his exile.”

That was more than we’d known yesterday. Derek hadn’t disappeared after Caius’s men left him at the border. He had gone into Greyhaven and stayed there long enough for wolves to remember him. Now we needed to know where he went after that.

We left our quarters and went toward the council room. Pryor was already there with several records spread across the table. Lira stood beside him while Raith waited near the window. Zeron arrived shortly after us.

“What did they find?”

Zeron looked at me.

“Derek stayed in Greyhaven.”

I moved closer.

“For how long?”

“Several months.”

That surprised me. I’d expected him to leave quickly after being banished from Ashcrest. Instead, he’d remained in one place long enough to become known. That gave us a better chance of finding someone who knew where he was now.

“Did he leave alone?”

Zeron opened the message he’d received.

“No.”

I looked at Caius.

“Helene?”

“Yes.”

So they had stayed together after exile. That mattered because Helene might know as much as Derek di about how I came into their lives. I hadn’t thought enough about that before.

“Where did they go?”

“The warriors are still confirming it.”

I hated waiting, but at least the search was moving. We had a real path now. Derek and Helene had lived Greyhaven together and then moved somewhere else. Someone there had to know where.

Pryar pulled one of the Keeper records toward us.

“I found something else.”

Caius took the seat beside me.

“About the families?”

“One of them.”

Pryor opened the book to a page marked with several notes. One family connected to the Keeper order had remained traceable for nearly two centuries after Varen’s death. Then the family name changed.

“What was the old name?”

“Caerwyn.”

I repeated it to myself. The name meant nothing to me. Pryor moved his finger farther down the page. The family had eventually joined another territory in the north.

“Which territory?”

“Ravencrest.”

Caius looked at him..

“Still there?”

“Possibly.”

I looked between them. Ravencrest wasn’t a name we’d discussed before. If descendants of a Keeper family still lived there, they might know something about the old order. But I didn’t want another long search before we dealt with Derek.

“Can we find Derek first?”

Caius looked at me.

“That’s the plan.”

Pryor nodded.

“The Keeper records can wait a day.”

The Greyhaven lead

That was what I wanted to hear. Derek was part of my life, not a name from centuries ago. If his family had carried Varen’s secret, he might know why I woke when I did. I wanted to hear his answer myself.

Lira picked up another page.

“There’s something strange about the Caerwyn records.”

Hooked at her.

“What?”

“The family stopped using the Keeper symbol.”

Pryor showed me the page. The old seal appeared beside several generations, then disappeared completely. There was no record explaining why. Another secret had been buried without explanation.

“Could they have stopped being Keepers?”

“Possibly.”

Caius studied the page.

“Or they stopped recording it.”

That seemed more likely after everything we’d found. The Keepers had disappeared from Council records, but Varen had stili referred to them. Someone had wanted the order hidden, not destroyed. The difference mattered.

Before anyone could continue, one of Caius’s warriors entered the council room. He stopped near Zeron and handed him another message. Zeron read it immediately. His expression changed.

“What is it?”

Zeron looked at me.

“They found where Derek went.”

I stood before I realized I’d moved.

“Where?”

“Still in Greyhaven.”

I frowned.

“You said he left.”

“He left the main settlement.”

Zeron explained that Derek and Helene had moved to a smaller village inside the same territory. They had kept to themselves since then. The warriors had confirmed they were still there.

My hands tightened at my sides.

“They found him.”

“Yes.”

I looked at Caius. We didn’t need to wait any longer. Derek was alive, and now we knew exactly where he was.

“When do we leave?”

“Tomorrow morning.”

I wanted to argue for today. Then I remembered how far Greyhaven was from Wraithbone. Leaving without preparing would only create problems we didn’t need.

“Fine.”

Caius looked at Zeron.

“Make arrangements.”

Zeron nodded and left. Raith followed him a moment later. Pryor began gathering the records we might need to take with us.

I looked at him.

“Bring the Garron Thorne record.”

“I will.”

That was the first thing I wanted Derek to see. Garron Thorne had been connected to Varen before I was born. If Derek recognized the name or knew what his family had passed down, his face might tell us before his mouth did.

Lira looked at me.

“Are you ready to see him again?”

I thought about that. Derek had once been able to make me feel small with a look. The last time I’d seen him, he had been on his knees after losing everything.

“Yes.”

There wasn’t anything else to say. I wasn’t going to Greyhaven as the daughter begging him to explain why he never loved me. I already knew who my real parents were.

Caius took my hand.

“We’ll get the truth.”

I looked at him.

“We’ll get whatever he knows.”

That was enough for now. Derek couldn’t give me back the years I’d lost or the father I’d never met. But he could tell me what the Thorne family knew about me.

And tomorrow, he would.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 288

Not found by chance

(Isla)

The next morning, we left Wraithbone shortly after sunrise. Caius sat beside me while Zeron and Raith traveled with us. Pryor had given Caius copies of everything connected to Garron Thorne and Varen. I thinking about what Derek would say when he saw the records.

Greyhaven looked different from the territories we’d visited during our search for Lyrienne. Smaller villi were spread between large stretches of forest, and wolves traveled freely between them. There were r walls separating one settlement from another. The warriors waiting for us had already spoken with Greyhaven’s Alpha.

One of them approached when we stopped.

“Alpha King.”

Caius stepped forward.

“Where is Derek?”

The warrior pointed toward a road leading away from the main settlement. Derek and Helene were living in a village less than an hour away. Neither had attempted to hide who they were. They simply kept away from most of the other wolves.

“Does Derek know we’re coming?”

“No.”

Good. I didn’t want him having time to decide what he planned to tell us. I wanted to see his reaction when we arrived. Caius seemed to feel the same way.

We continued toward the village with the two warriors leading us. I watched the trees pass while thinking about Ashcrest. Derek had spent years making decisions about my life without ever giving me a choice. Today, he wouldn’t control the conversation.

Vaela came closer.

‘He’ll recognize Garron’s name.’

‘You sound certain.’

‘I am.

I didn’t ask how she knew. Sometimes Vaela understood things before I did. Whether Derek recognized the name or not, we were going to ask him about it.

The village appeared ahead. Homes stood along both sides of a narrow road with a few small businesses farther down. Wolves noticed our arrival immediately. Seeing the Alpha King in their village wasn’t something they could easily ignore.

The warrior stopped outside one of the homes.

Not found by chance

This is it.”

+ stared at the building. It was smaller than the home Derek had once controlled in Ashcrest. Nothing about it showed the rank he’d lost. He was simply another wolf living in Greyhaven now.

Caius looked at me.

“Ready?”

“Yes.”

We walked toward the entrance together. Zeron and Raith remained several steps behind us while the warriors waited near the road. Caius knocked. Footsteps came from inside.

Helene opened the door.

She stared at me.

“Isla.”

I hadn’t known what I expected to feel when I saw her again. Anger was there, but it didn’t control me. Mostly, I remembered how many times she’d watched what happened to me and chosen not to stop it.

“Where’s Derek?”

Helene looked at Caius before answering.

“Inside.”

She stepped away from the entrance. Caius entered first, and I followed him. Zeron and Raith came in behind us.

Derek appeared from another part of the home. He stopped the moment he saw me. His face changed when he noticed Caius beside me. Then his attention moved to the necklace around my neck.

“What are you doing here?”

“I have questions.”

Derek looked toward the records Caius carried. Something changed in his expression before he covered

“Sit down.”

Derek remained where he was.

“I’d rather stand.”

I didn’t care. I took the first record from Caius and placed it on the table. Garron Thorne’s name was written clearly near the top.

“Do you know that name?”

Derek looked at the page.

Ca

Not found by chance

“Yes.”

My heart jumped.

“Who was he?”

Clavos

Derek didn’t answer immediately Helene had remained near the entrance. She looked at him as though she already knew what he was trying not to say.

“Derek.”

He finally looked at me.

“An ancestor.”

I already knew that much. I wanted to know what Garron’s name meant inside the Thorne family. I placed another page beside the first.

“He knew Councilor Varen.”

Derek’s eyes went to the second page. This time, he couldn’t hide his reaction quickly enough. Recognitior was there.

“You know Varen too.”

“I know the name.”

I moved closer to the table. Derek had just confirmed something we’d only suspected. The Thorne family had remembered Varen centuries after his death.

“What were you told about him?”

Derek looked toward Caius.

“Answer her.”

Derek returned his attention to me. For several seconds, he said nothing. Then he pulled out a chair and sat.

“There were stories passed through my family.”

I sat across from him.

“About me?”

Derek looked at my face.

“About a child.”

Everything inside me became focused on him. Helene moved farther into the home but remained silent. Caius stood beside my chair.

“What child?”

“A girl Garron was told to protect.”

Clam stared at him. Protect wasn’t the word I would have used for what happened. Garron had received me after Corvin stole me from my parents.

“Who told him to protect her?”

“I don’t know.”

I didn’t believe that was everything.

“What happened to the girl?”

Derek looked away.

The story said she disappeared.”

eached for Varen’s copied record. I placed it directly in front of him. The words about the protected leep were there.

She didn’t disappear.”

Derek read the page. His face changed again. This time, surprise looked real.

“You didn’t know.”

“No.”

That answer created another question.

“Then how did you find me?”

Derek became still.

Helene looked at him.

I waited.

“Derek.”

He looked at me again.

“My father told me where to go.”

I stared at him.

“Your father knew where I was?”

“He knew where something had been hidden.”

My hands closed around the edge of the table. Derek hadn’t found me by chance. Someone in the Thome family had carried my location through generations.

vou?”

ords.

alled to retrieve what our family had been trusted to keep.”

Leouldn’t speak for a moment. Three hundred years of silence had ended because someone finally gav Derek an instruction. My awakening hadn’t been an accident.

“Who called you?”

Derek looked directly at me

“1 never knew his name.”

Caius moved closer.

“Then tell us everything else you know.”

Derek’s attention returned to the old records.

“I can tell you where I found her.”

That was enough to change everything again.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 289

Where I was found

Where I was found

(sla)

I kept my eyes on Derek. He had known where I was found all these years and had never once told me. That place might still contain something about the wolves who hid me. I needed every detail he remembered.

“Where?”

Derek looked at Caius before answering.

“South of Ashcrest.”

I waited for him to continue. He explained that there was an old stretch of forest beyond what had once been part of Ashcrest territory. His father had taken him there when he was young. At the time, Derek hadn’t understood why.

“Did he show you where I was?”

“No.”

I frowned.

“Then what did he show you?”

“A stone entrance.”

That caught my attention. I remembered the chamber Vaela had shown me through the Celestial Stone. Symbols had covered the walls around the place where I’d slept. One of them had belonged to the Keepers.

“What was inside?”

Derek looked down at the records.

“Nothing when I first went there.”

His father had only shown him the entrance and told him to remember how to find it. Derek hadn’t returned for years. By then, his father was dead and the strange lesson had become another family story he hadn’t expected to matter.

“How did you know when to return?”

Derek looked at me.

“A message came.”

Where I was found

Caius moved nearer to the table.

“What kind of message?”

“A letter.”

Derek said it had arrived without a name or territory written on it. There had been no explanation about who sent it. The message contained only a few words telling him that what the Thornes had protected was ready to be collected.

“Do you still have it?”

“No.”

I studied him.

“What happened to it?”

“I burned it.”

Of course he had. I wanted to ask why anyone would destroy something that strange, but the answer probably wouldn’t help us now. What mattered was what happened afterward.

“Tell me what you found.”

Derek looked at Helene.

“She was with me.“‘

I turned toward her.

“You went too?”

Helene nodded.

“I did.”

She came closer to the table but didn't sit. Her face held none of the confidence she'd once carried in Ashcrest. She looked at Derek before turning back to me.

"When we arrived, the entrance was open."

I listened as Helene described the place. They had walked through a short passage before reaching a stone chamber. There were markings everywhere, but neither of them understood what they meant. At the center had been something neither expected to find.

"You."

My breath caught even though I'd known where the story was going.

Where I was found

"What did I look like?"

Helene looked at me.

"Like a sleeping baby."

Three centuries had passed while my body remained unchanged. Derek and Helene had walked into that chamber and found me exactly as Corvin's people had left me. I tried to imagine what they must have thought.

"Were I awake?"

"No."

Derek answered that one. He said I hadn't moved when he first lifted me from the stone where I'd been placed. For several minutes, he'd wondered whether I was even alive.

"What happened when you carried me outside?"

"You opened your eyes."

I stared at him. So leaving the chamber had ended whatever kept me asleep. Whoever sent the letter had known exactly when that would happen.

Vaela came forward.

'The Keeper.'

I thought the same thing. Someone had known I was ready to wake and had contacted Derek at the right time. That wolf might have been watching the chamber for generations.

“Did you see anyone else?”

“No.”

Derek answered without hesitation. He hadn’t seen another wolf anywhere near the entrance. Whoever sent him there had made sure not to be present,

Caius placed the copied Keeper symbol on the table.

“Did you see this?”

Derek looked down.

His face answered before he did.

“Where?”

I moved the page closer to him.

Where I was found

“Did you see it?”

“Yes.”

Derek pointed to the symbol. It had been carved above the entrance to the chamber. He’d remembered it because his father had shown him the same mark years earlier.

“Did your father tell you what it meant?”

“Only that it belonged to the wolves our family answered to.”

I looked at Caius. That was more than we’d had when we arrived. The Thornes hadn’t simply been connected to Varen.

They had answered to the Keepers.

“Did Garron’s name ever come up?”

Derek looked at the old record.

“Yes.”

I waited.

“My father said Garron failed.”

That surprised me.

“Failed at what?”

“He never told me.”

I didn’t accept that as the end of it. Derek’s father had taken him to the chamber and taught him about a responsibility that had survived for generations. There had to be more.

“What else did your father tell you about Garron?”

Derek thought before answering.

“That he was supposed to keep the child until someone came for her.”

I stared at him. Garron hadn’t been meant to raise me. He’d only been another part of the plan.

“Then I disappeared before that happened.”

“According to the story.”

That changed how I understood Garron and Elira. Perhaps they hadn’t placed me into the protected sleep themselves. Someone could have taken me from them.

Where i was found

“Did your family know who took me?”

“No.”

Derek’s answer came quickly, but this time I believed him. Garron’s failure had apparently become part of the family history because he’d lost the child entrusted to him. The Thornes had spent generations waiting for the chance to finish what he’d failed to do.

Helene remained beside the table.

“There’s something else.”

I turned toward her.

“What?”

“When we found you, there was a box beside you.”

I stared at her.

“What was inside?”

Helene looked at Derek.

“He never opened it.”

My attention returned to him immediately.

“Where is it?”

Derek didn’t answer.

Caius stepped closer.

“Derek.”

Derek looked at me.

“I left it in Ashcrest.”

My thoughts went straight to the place I’d once called home. If nobody had found the box after Derek’s banishment, it might still be there. Whatever the Keepers had left beside me had been sitting within reach all along.

“Where in Ashcrest?”

Derek held my gaze.

“Hidden beneath the floor in my study.”

Where I was found

I stood.

We had come to Greyhaven looking for answers from Derek. Instead, he’d given us another piece that had been waiting since the day I woke. This time, we knew exactly where to find it.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 290

The box beneath the floor

(Isla)

I didn’t want to spend another minute in Greyhaven. The box had been hidden in Derek’s study since the day he brought me to Ashcrest. I had lived in that home without knowing something connected to my past was beneath the floor. Derek had known it was there the entire time.

“Why did you keep it?”

Derek looked at the records on the table.

“I was told to.”

I stared at him.

“By who?”

“The same letter.”

That was new. Derek explained that the message hadn’t only told him to retrieve me. It had instructed him to keep the box hidden and never open it. He had followed that order even after years passed without another message.

“Why?”

“I thought someone would eventually come for it.”

I couldn’t understand that. He’d raised me while keeping something found beside me hidden only a few steps away. Not once had he wondered whether it belonged to me.

“You never thought I should know?”

Derek met my eyes.

“No.”

The answer hurt, but it didn’t surprise me. Derek had never treated me as though I deserved answers about anything. Before we learned I was Celestial, he’d believed I was nothing more than the wolfless girl he’d been forced to raise.

Caius placed both hands against the table.

“Describe the box.”

The box beneath the floor

Derek looked at him.

“Black stone, about this long.”

He held his hands apart. The size was small enough that it could have been carried easily. Derek said there were markings on the lid, but he hadn’t understood them.

“The divided circle?”

“No.”

I looked at him.

“The Keeper symbol?”

“Yes.”

That answered one question. The box had almost certainly been left by the same wolves connected to my protected sleep. Whatever was inside might tell us why.

“Did Helene know where you hid it?”

Derek looked toward her.

“Yes.”

Helene nodded when I turned to her. She’d known about the box from the beginning. Derek had told her never to touch it.

“Did you?”

“No.”

I believed her. If she’d opened it, Derek would probably have known. More importantly, neither of them had any reason to lie about that now.

Caius looked at me.

“We return to Ashcrest.”

“Today.”

He didn’t argue. Greyhaven had given us what we came for. Staying here wouldn’t answer anything else.

Derek stood when we did.

“There’s one more thing.”

I stopped.

“What?”

“The place where we found you wasn’t empty afterward.”

turned fully toward him. He had said nobody else was there when he and Helene arrived. That wasn’t what he meant now.

“When did you go back?”

“Years later.”

Derek explained that he’d returned after I was old enough to walk. He’d never received another letter, but curiosity had finally taken him back. The entrance was still there.

“What did you find?”

“The chamber had been cleared.”

Ciali

I frowned. The markings had remained, but everything else was gone. Even the stone where Derek said he’d found me had been removed.

“Someone came back.”

“That’s what I thought.”

That meant the Keeper hadn’t simply sent Derek and forgotten about the place. Someone had returned after I was removed. They had taken whatever might have remained behind.

“How long after you found me?”

“About four years.”

I thought about those years. By then, I had been living in Ashcrest as Derek and Helene’s daughter. Whoever returned to the chamber could have known exactly where I was.

“Did you tell anyone?”

“No.”

Derek had kept it to himself. He'd apparently decided that if the wolves behind the letter wanted something from him, they could contact him again. They never did.

Caius gathered the records.

"Did you ever receive another message from them?"

"Never."

I looked at Helene.

"Did anyone ever ask about me?"

She thought about the question.

"One wolf."

Every part of me became focused on her.

"Who?"

"I don't know his name."

Helene explained that a stranger had visited Ashcrest when I was around five. He hadn't asked to see me directly. Instead, he'd asked whether the child Derek had taken in was healthy.

"What did you tell him?"

"That you were."

I tried to remember being five years old. Nothing about a strange visitor came back to me. I might never have seen him.

"What did he look like?"

Helene described a man with dark hair who appeared to be somewhere around forty. He hadn't given a pack name. After asking about me, he'd left without explaining why he cared.

"Did Derek know?"

"Yes."

I turned toward him.

“And you didn’t think that was strange?”

“Of course I did.”

Derek said he’d followed the wolf after he left. The man had disappeared before reaching Ashcrest’s border. Derek never saw him again.

Vaela moved inside me.

He was checking on us.

I agreed. Someone had wanted to know whether I’d survived waking. The Keeper order hadn’t stopped watching after Derek found me.

Caius headed toward the entrance.

“We’ve heard enough.”

I followed him, but stopped before leaving. I looked back at Derek and Helene. There was one thing I needed them to understand.

“If we need you again, you’ll answer.”

Derek nodded.

“I will.”

I stepped outside with Caius. Zeron and Raith followed while our warriors remained nearby. I wanted to reach Ashcrest as soon as possible.

Caius looked at Zeron.

“Send word ahead.”

Zeron immediately called one of the warriors over. The current Ashcrest leadership needed to know we were coming. I didn’t want anyone entering Derek’s old study before we arrived.

“Tell them to seal the study.”

Zeron nodded.

“No one enters until we get there.”

I looked toward the road out of Greyhaven. Somewhere beneath the floor of Derek's old study was a box left beside me more than twenty years ago. The Keeper had ordered Derek to protect it without ever knowing what it contained.

Now it belonged to me.

And I was finally going to open it.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 291

The box beneath the study

(Isla)

We left Greyhaven without returning to the main settlement. The warriors rode ahead while Zeron sent word to Ashcrest about our arrival. I sat beside Caius with Derek's answers running through my mind. The box mattered more than anything he'd said.

By the time Ashcrest came into view, the current leaders were waiting for us. They met us near the entrance and bowed to Caius. None of them questioned why we'd returned without warning. Zeron's message had clearly made the order clear.

"The study?"

One of the leaders stepped forward.

"Sealed as ordered."

I looked toward the home where I'd spent most of my life. Returning felt different now that Derek and Helene were gone. I no longer saw it as the place where I belonged. It was simply somewhere I'd survived.

Caius walked beside me as we entered. Zeron and Raith followed while the others remained outside. Nothing had been moved in Derek's old study since the leadership change. The door had been locked after his removal.

"Where did he say?"

"Under the floor."

I crossed to the place Derek had described before we left Greyhaven. His old desk still stood near the wall. According to him, the box was beneath the floor directly behind it. Caius moved the desk aside.

Raith crouched and examined the boards.

“One has been lifted before.”

I moved closer. There was a narrow space around one section that I wouldn’t have noticed without knowing what to look for. Raith worked his fingers beneath it and pulled. The board came free.

Something black rested underneath.

My breath caught.

The box beneath the study

“There.”

Caius crouched beside the opening. He didn’t reach inside immediately. The Keeper symbol was visible across the top exactly as Derek had described. Seeing it outside Vaela’s memories made everything feel different.

“Don’t touch it yet.”

I looked

Caius.

“Wh know what was done to it.”

ight. Varen and the Keepers had known things about Celestials that even Lyrienne understood. Opening something they’d left behind without knowing what it could do twise. I stayed where I was.

on examined the space around the box.

Nothing else is there.”

Caius looked at me.

“Can Vaela sense anything?”

I waited. Vaela came forward and seemed to study the object through me. There was no fear from her.

‘It’s old.’

‘Can I touch it?’

‘I think so.’

I trusted her. I crouched and reached into the opening. The moment my fingers touched the black stone, warmth passed through my hand.

A memor

I say lov d me.

5 now. He placed the box beneath the floor and ear the desk watching him. Then everything

The box beneath the study

“What happened?”

“I saw Derek hide it.”

That meant Vaela’s ability worked on the box too. More importantly, the memory hadn’t harmed either of us. I reached down again and lifted it from the opening.

The box was heavier than it looked. The Keeper symbol covered most of the lid. Smaller markings ran along the sides. I recognized some from the Celestial chamber beneath Frostvale.

“This was made for someone like me.”

Caius studied it.

“Can you open it?”

I placed the box on Derek’s desk. There was no lock that I could see. When I tried lifting the lid, nothing happened.

“It won’t open.”

Vaela moved closer.

‘The symbol.’

I placed my palm over the Keeper mark. Nothing changed. Then I remembered how Varen’s stone box had opened when I touched the divided circle.

I closed my eyes.

‘Show me.’

Warmth moved through my fingers again. This time, the memory wasn't Derek's. The study disappeared.

A stone chamber surrounded me.

I saw the sleeping baby immediately.

side the stone where I slept. The same dark covering from Vaela's earlier is face. The black box rested in their hands.

(1 face either. He carried something small and placed it inside the box. The

The box beneath the study first wolf closed the lid.

'Look at him.'

Vaela tried.

The memory moved before his face became clear. I saw the box placed beside me. Then the hidden wolf touched my forehead.

The ime disappeared.

my eyes.

as watching me.

did you see?"

meone put something inside."

looked down at the box. Whatever had been placed there had remained untouched for more than twenty years. Derek hadn't opened it.

"Can you see what it was?"

"No."

I tried the lid again.

This time it opened.

Everyone moved closer. I stared inside without reaching for anything. A folded piece of cloth covered whatever lay beneath it.

I removed the cloth.

There was a small silver seal underneath. Beside it rested a folded letter. A name had been front. written across t er had written this had known the name my parents gave me before That meant the person responsible had known exactly who I was.

at the letter.

The box beneath the study

“Don’t open it yet.”

I nodded. Vaela was already responding to it. Something about the letter felt different from the box.

reached toward the silver seal instead.

e symbol carved into it wasn’t the Keeper mark.

knew it.

d seen the same symbol among Pryor’s Council records before we left Wraithbone.

“That’s a Council seal.”

Caius looked closer.

“Whose?”

I tried to remember where I’d seen it. Then a conversation from before our journey returned to me. A Council member had come to our door and asked whether Vaela had ever spoken a name I didn’t recognize.

Evander.

I looked at Caius.

“We need to take this back to Wraithbone.”

His eyes remained on the seal.

“Why?”

I picked it up carefully and turned it over.

A family name was carved into the other side.

I stared at it.

“Because I think this belongs to Evander’s family.”

UCK DRAW >

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 292

The letter to Islalienne

The letter to Islalienne

(Isla)

Caius took the seal from me and studied the family name. I could tell he recognized it too, though neither of us had paid much attention to it when Pryor showed us the older Council records. Evander had already given us reasons to question what he knew about my past. Finding something connected to his family beside me changed that.

“We take everything.”

I looked at the unopened letter.

“I want to read it.”

Caius looked at me.

“Here?”

“Yes.”

I wasn’t carrying a letter addressed to Islalienne all the way back to Wraithbone without knowing what it said. Whoever had written it expected me to receive it one day. Derek had been ordered not to open the box. Maybe that was because the letter had never been meant for him.

I picked it up carefully. The paper showed its age, but it hadn’t been damaged inside the stone box. My full name remained clear across the front. I turned it over.

There was no seal holding it closed. I opened the paper and found only a few lines inside. The writing was different from Varen’s. I began reading.

Islalienne, if this has reached you, then you have awakened.

I stopped.

Caius moved beside me.

“Keep going.”

I looked back at the letter.

What was done to you was necessary to keep you beyond Varen’s reach.

My eyes stayed on the sentence. Everything we’d discovered had pointed toward Varen being responsible for my protected sleep. This letter said the opposite.

The letter to Islalienne

“Someone was protecting me from him.”

Caius read the words himself.

“Apparently.”

I continued.

The Thornes were never meant to know where you slept. Garron’s failure forced another path. When the time was right, his bloodline would be used to return you to the world without knowing what they carried.

I read it again.

Garron hadn’t failed because he’d lost me accidentally. Someone had taken me away from him on purpose. Whoever placed me into the protected sleep had been working against

Varen.

“That changes Garron’s part.”

Caius nodded.

“It does.”

I thought about Lyrienne reaching Ashcrest months after Corvin took me. Garron and Elira had denied having a child because by then I really wasn’t there. Whether they’d lied about receiving me in the first place was another question. But someone else had intervened before my mother arrived.

I returned to the letter.

Do not trust the Council with what you are.

The next line made me stop again.

One among them will recognize Vaela before he recognizes you.

Vaela came forward immediately.

stion exactly. He hadn't asked about my powers or what I'd discovered d asked whether my wolf had spoken a name I didn't recognize.

"Read the rest."

I continued.

If he asks about a name, the old promise has survived.

I stared at those words.

"He knew."

Caius took the letter and read the line himself. Evander's strange question no longer seemed strange. He had been checking for something.

"What old promise?"

"I don't know."

There were only a few lines left. I moved closer so we could read them together. The final part was shorter.

Find the one who remembers what the Council buried. The Keeper protects the truth, but not every Keeper protects you.

There was no signature.

I turned the paper over. Nothing had been written on the back. Whoever had left the message wanted me to know enough to search, but not enough to identify them.

Zeron stepped closer to the desk.

"So there were Keepers on different sides."

"Looks that way."

That explained why the Keeper symbol had appeared around the chamber even though Varen had been involved with the order. Someone within the same group might have discovered what he intended to do. They'd taken me before his plan could be completed.

Raith looked at the silver seal.

"And Evander's family?"

Mooked at it.

e need Pryor."

was no point guessing when the records were waiting in Wraithbone. Pryor could trace tly name and tell us whether Evander's ancestors had belonged to the Keeper order.

The letter to Islalienne

More importantly, Evander himself was already in custody.

Caius folded the letter and returned it to the box.

"We leave."

I stopped him before he closed the lid.

"The seal."

He handed it to me.

I looked at the family name again. If it belonged to Evander's family, I wanted to know how it ended up beside me. Someone had purposely placed it inside the box before leaving me in the chamber.

"Could it have belonged to the person who saved me?"

Caius considered the question.

"Or someone they wanted you to find."

That possibility stayed with me as I returned the seal to the box. Whoever wrote the letter had expected me to wake eventually. They'd also expected the Thorne family to bring me out. We left Derek's study with the box in Caius's hands. Zeron informed Ashcrest's leaders that the study could be opened again. There was nothing else we needed from the house. Our next answers weren't here.

Outside, I looked back once.

For years, I'd believed every secret inside that place belonged to Derek. Now I knew something far older had been hidden beneath his feet. He'd only understood a small part of

Vaela moved inside me.

'Evander knows.'

Moward Caius.

Fander as soon as we return."

This time Evander wouldn't be the one appearing at our door and asking questions he had no reason to ask. We knew about Varen, the Keepers, Garron, and the protected sleep now. We also had a seal that might connect his own family to everything.

I followed Caius toward the others.

Evander had asked whether Vaela had ever spoken a name I didn't recognize.

Now I wanted to know why.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 293

The broken oath

The broken oath

(Isla)

We reached Wraithbone before evening. Caius kept the black box with him during the journey, and I couldn't stop thinking about the words inside the letter. Evander had asked exactly the question the writer said someone eventually would. I wanted to know how he'd known to ask

Pryor was waiting when we entered the pack house. Lira stood beside him with several records she'd gathered after receiving Zeron's message. Pryor's attention went immediately to the black box in Caius's hands. He followed us toward the council room without asking anything.

"Show him the seal."

Caius placed the box on the table.

I opened it and removed the silver seal. Pryor took it from me and turned it over. The moment he saw the family name, recognition appeared on his face. He reached for one of the records Lira carried.

“You’ve seen it before?”

“Yes.”

He opened the record and searched through several pages. I watched until his finger stopped beside a family name. It matched the one carved into the silver seal. Evander’s family was listed beside it.

“What does it say?”

Pryor read farther.

“His family served the Council for generations.”

That alone didn’t explain why their seal had been placed beside me. Plenty of families had served the Council over the centuries. I needed to know whether Evander’s family had another connection. Pryor turned several more pages.

He stopped.

“This is different.”

Caius moved closer.

“What did you find?”

Pryor showed him an older entry. Evander’s family had been trusted with information that ordinary Council members weren’t allowed to see. The date came from the period when references to the Keepers had started disappearing. There was still no mention of the order by name.

“Could they have been Keepers?”

Pryoked toward Lira.

the older record.”

ft the table and returned with another book. Pryor opened it near the middle and began paring names between the two records. Several generations appeared in both. Then he und what he needed.

“There.”

I moved beside him. The Keeper symbol appeared next to the name of one of Evander’s ancestors. It was the same mark we’d found on the black box. There was no longer any question about the connection.

“His family were Keepers.”

“At least some of them.”

Caius looked toward the letter.

“And the promise?”

Pryor shook his head. Nothing he’d found mentioned a promise involving a Celestial child. If Evander knew about it, the information might never have been placed in Council records. It hrough his family instead. could have on him.”

Pryor.

ler appeared at our door. He’d been careful about what he asked why he cared whether Vaela had spoken an unfamiliar name.

ad been waiting for me for centuries.

ander being held?”

cil prison.”

The broken oath

I hadn’t thought about where they’d taken him after he was removed from his position. He’d been removed from the Council and taken into custody after we discovered he’d ordered Rodan to use wolfsbane to suppress my first shift.

“How far?”

“We can reach it tomorrow.”

Hooked at Caius. Part of me wanted to leave immediately, but we’d already spent hours veling from Greyhaven to Ashcrest and then back to Wraithbone. Evander wasn’t going nywhere. More importantly, we had something to prepare before we faced him.

Caius picked up the seal.

“Send word that we’re coming.”

Pryor nodded.

“I’ll do it.”

I looked down at the letter again. Evander had been sitting in the Council prison while we’d traveled through Silvermere, Evercrest, Frostvale, Greyhaven, and Ashcrest. During that time, we’d uncovered pieces he might have known about all along. Tomorrow he would finally tell us how much.

Lira turned another page in the Keeper record.

“There’s another entry.”

I moved toward her.

“What does it say?”

She pointed to Evander’s ancestor. A small mark appeared beside his name that hadn’t been included beside the others. Pryor examined it before reaching for another record. He seemed to know what he was looking for.

“What do

“Br

The broken oath

That made me think about the letter again. Not every Keeper protects you. If Evander’s ancestor had broken an oath, perhaps he’d been one of the wolves who turned against Varen.

“Maybe he helped save me.”

Caius looked at the silver seal.

“That would explain why this was left with you.”

It was possib helped me expected

Pryo ut we still didn’t know enough. The seal could have been proof of who y of leading me toward Evander’s family. Whoever wrote the letter had nderstand eventually. Three centuries later, I finally had the chance.

e of the records.

know what the mark means.”

e ask him.”

returned the seal to the black box. I placed the letter beside it before closing the lid. Borrow we would take both to Evander. I wanted to see his reaction before we told him thing we’d learned.

eron came into the council room. He had already received word about our plans for tomorrow. Raith would travel with us again, while Pryor would come because of what he’d found in the records. That meant we’d have everything we needed when Evander started answering questions.

“Who remains here?”

“Lira.”

Caius nodded. There was no reason to take everyone with us. The Council prison would

We weren’t going there expecting trouble. already hav

I look stu

Less than a day ago, it had been hidden beneath Derek’s s family directly to the Keepers. I wondered how much him.

Tomorrow we’ll find out what’

I picked up the copied Keeper record and looked again at the mark beside Evander’s ancestor. Broken oath could mean many things. If he’d broken his oath to protect me from Varen, then Evander’s family had once chosen my life over their duty.

But the letter had carried another warning.

Not every Keeper ected me.

Some had ch ren.

I looked

“If Ev bes ly helped save me, then we need to know who they were protecting me from y eyes.

him.”

and looked back at the names in the record. Somewhere among the families Pryor en tracing could be the bloodline of a Keeper who’d chosen the other side. Three ries had passed, but Evander’s family had survived.

ere was no reason to believe they were the only ones.

omorrow we would go to the Council prison.

And Evander was going to tell us what survived with them.

~

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 294

The loyal keepers

(Isla)

The Council prison stood apart from the buildings where hearings were held. We arrived the next morning with Pryor, Zeron, and Raith traveling with us. Caius carried the black box while Pryor had the records he'd found about Evander's family. I wondered what Evander would do when he saw both.

Two Council guards met us at the entrance. They recognized Caius immediately and opened the gates without keeping us waiting. Pryor had sent notice of our visit the night before. Evander was already being brought to a place where we could speak with him.

We followed the guards through several corridors. I had expected to feel angry knowing Evander was somewhere inside. Instead, I kept thinking about the seal his grandfather had once owned. Evander had done terrible things to me, but one of his ancestors might have helped save my life.

A guard stopped outside a closed door.

"He's inside."

Caius looked at me.

"Ready?"

"Yes."

The guard opened the door. Evander sat at a table with his hands resting in front of him. He looked different without his Council robes, but I felt nothing for the position he'd lost. His choices had brought him here.

His eyes found me first.

“Isla.”

I entered with Caius.

“We have more questions.”

Pryor came in behind us carrying the records. Zerop and Raith remained outside with the guards. Evander watched Pryor place the books on the table. Then Caius set the black box beside them.

Evander stared at it.

I noticed immediately.

“You recognize it.”

His eyes remained on the Keeper symbol.

“Where did you get that?”

I sat across from him.

“Derek’s sturty

Evander finally looked at me. I didn’t explain anything else. I wanted him wondering how much we already knew.

Caius opened the box.

The silver seal was the first thing he removed. He placed it on the table with the family name facing Evander. Evander’s face changed as soon as he saw it.

“That’s impossible.”

Pryor sat beside me.

“Why?”

Evander reached toward the seal but stopped before touching it. His attention remained on the family name. Whatever he was seeing meant something to him. I waited for him to explain.

“That belonged to my grandfather.”

I looked at Caius.

“We know.”

Evander’s attention went back to the black box. He asked where the seal had been found inside it. Caius didn’t answer. Evander wasn’t the one asking questions today.

I placed the letter on the table.

“Why did you ask whether Vaela had spoken a name I didn’t recognize?”

Evander stared at me. For several seconds, he didn’t/answer. Then his eyes went to the letter.

“Who wrote that?”

“Answer me.”

Evander sat back. He looked from the letter to the seal again, Whatever he’d kept hidden was becoming harder to protect. He finally spoke.

“My father taught me that question.”

I remembered what we’d suspected.

“Why?”

“He didn’t tell me everything.”

That wasn’t enough. Evander had ordered Rodan to suppress my first shift with wolfsbane. He’d known enough about Celestials to understand what preventing Vaela from appearing would do. His actions couldn’t be separated from whatever his family had passed down.

Calus moved closer to the table.

“Tell her what he did tell you.”

Evander looked at him.

“Our family had a duty.”

Pryor opened the Keeper record.

“To them?”

Evander looked at the symbol beside his ancestor's name. He didn't pretend not to recognize it. That told me Pryor had been right.

"Yes."

I leaned forward.

"Your family were Keepers."

"Once."

I thought about the mark beside his ancestor's name. Pryor had believed it meant a broken oath. Now we could finally learn which oath had been broken.

"What did your grandfather do?"

Evander looked at the seal.

"He chose the child."

I became completely focused on him.

"Me."

"Yes."

Evander explained that Varen had convinced part of the Keeper order that another Celestial couldn't be allowed to grow beyond Council control. His grandfather had discovered what Varen intended after Corvin took me. By then, I had already been delivered to Garron Thorne.

"What happened next?"

"My grandfather helped remove you."

That confirmed what the letter suggested, Garron hadn't simply lost me. Wolves working against Varen had taken me from the Thornes.

"Did your grandfather put me to sleep?"

"No."

I watched him carefully.

"Who did?"

Evander looked toward Pryor's records.

"I was never told."

The loyal keepers believed he might truly not know that part. His family had passed down pieces rather than the entire story. Whoever protected the truth had apparently made sure no single family carried everything.

Pryor pointed toward the mark beside Evander's ancestor.

"Why was his oath marked as broken?"

"Because he betrayed the other Keepers"

That made sense now. The broken oath hadn't been against the Council. Evander's grandfather had turned against the Keepers who supported Varen.

I touched the letter.

"What was the old promise?"

Evander looked at me again.

"That if you ever returned, someone from our bloodline would make sure Vaela awakened."

My thoughts stopped there.

Evander had ordered the opposite.

"You suppressed her."

His face changed.

"I know."

Anger rose inside me.

"Then you broke the promise too."

Evander didn't deny it. He'd inherited a duty his grandfather had risked everything to preserve and then chosen fear when the moment arrived. I wanted to understand why.

"Why would you do that?"

Evander looked down at his hands.

“Because I learned what Varen feared.”

I stared at him.

“What?”

“Not what you are.”

Tvander raised his eyes.

hat Vaela can do.”

stopped turning the pages.

knew about her ability?”

Evander said the records passed through his family spoke of a Celestial wolf who would uncover things that had been hidden from history. His father believed that wolf would eventually be born. Evander hadn’t known it would be Vaela until my first shift became possible.

“That’s why you stopped it.”

“Yes.”

I couldn’t believe him. His grandfather had helped save me because Varen feared what I might become. Generations later, Evander had allowed that same fear to control him.

Caius placed his hand beside the letter.

“Who else knew?”

Evarider didn’t answer.

I watched his face.

“Evander.”

His eyes moved toward me.

“There was another family.”

Everything inside me became alert.

“Which family?”.

Evander looked at the Keeper record Pryor had brought. His attention stopped somewhere on the open page before returning to me. He still didn't give us a name.

"I don't know what they call themselves now."

Caius didn't move.

"Then give us the old name."

Evander hesitated.

"Valdyr."

Pryor immediately searched the records. I watched his finger move down the old Keeper families until he stopped. The name was there.

And beside it was no mark showing a broken oath.

The Valdyrs had remained loyal.

IN

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 295

The Valdyr secret

(Isla)

Pryor kept his finger beside the Valdyr name. The family appeared several times through the Keeper records, and unlike Evander's ancestor, none of them carried the mark for a broken oath. We already knew they had remained loyal to the Keeper order. What we didn't know was what that loyalty had meant.

"Loyal to whom?"

Evander looked at me.

"The Keepers."

That didn't answer enough. Varen had convinced some Keepers that I needed to remain under their control, while others had helped remove me from Garron. The order had been divided long before I was placed into protected sleep.

“Which side were the Valdyrs on?”

Evander looked at the open record.

“Neither, at first.”

I frowned. I hadn’t expected that answer. Evander explained that the Valdyrs believed their duty was to protect knowledge rather than choose between Varen and the wolves who opposed him. That changed after I disappeared.

“What happened?”

“They started searching for you.”

I looked at Caius. Evander’s grandfather had helped hide me, yet the Valdyrs had apparently spent years trying to discover where I’d been taken. That could mean they wanted to protect me.

“Did they know your grandfather helped?”

“Eventually.”

Evander’s attention moved to the silver seal. His grandfather had disappeared from the Keeper order after helping remove me from Garron. By the time the Valdyrs learned what he’d done, he had already hidden every path that could lead them to me.

“Were they angry?”

“Yes.”

I could understand why. From their view, a Celestial child had vanished and one of their own had betrayed the order to make it happen. They wouldn’t have known whether I was alive.

Pryor looked farther down the page.

“Your family and the Valdyrs remained enemies?”

“For generations.”

That gave us something new. Evander’s family hadn’t simply left the Keepers and gone on with their lives. The choice his grandfather made had created a division that survived long after Varen died.

“Then how do you know they still exist?”

Evander looked at me.

“Because I met one.”

Caius moved nearer.

“When?”

Evander didn’t answer immediately. His eyes went toward the black box before returning to us. Whatever came next was something he’d kept hidden for years.

“Twenty years ago.”

I stared at him. That was around the same time Derek had received the letter telling him to retrieve me. Evander had met a Valdyr when my protected sleep was ending.

“Who?”

“Orin Valdyr.”

Pryor reached for another record. The name wasn’t among the older entries in front of us, which made sense if Orin had been born centuries later. We finally had the name of someone connected to the Keeper family in our own time.

“Where did you meet him?”

“At the Council.”

Evander explained that Orin had arrived without requesting a hearing. He hadn’t come for Council business either. He’d asked specifically for Evander.

“What did he want?”

Evander looked directly at me.

“To know whether the child had returned”

I felt every part of my attention settle on him. Orin had known my protected sleep was ending, just as whoever sent Derek’s letter had known. The Valdyr family had been waiting for me.

“What did you tell him?”

“That I didn’t know.”

That made sense if Evander hadn't yet known where I was. Derek had taken me back to Ashcrest without understanding what he carried. Years would pass before anyone connected me to the Celestial child from the old stories.

The Valdyrsettel

"Did Orin believe you?"

"No."

Evander said Orin had warned him that the old promise would soon matter again. Evander hadn't understood everything he meant at the time. His father had taught him the question about an unfamiliar name, but he'd never expected to use it.

"What else did Orin say?"

"That the Celestial wolf would remember."

Vaela moved inside me.

'Remember what?'

I had the same question. Her ability allowed her to see memories held by objects, but we still didn't know everything she could do. Maybe the Valdyrs did.

"Did he know about Vaela's ability?"

"Some of it."

I thought about what we'd discovered in Frostvale. Vaela had reached memories no ordinary wolf could see. If Orin had known that would happen before I even woke, his family had kept knowledge that disappeared from the Council records.

"What did he tell you?"

Evander looked toward Pryor.

"That once her gift appeared, things hidden for centuries could be found."

Pryor stopped looking through the records. That explained why Evander had become afraid once he realized I might be the Celestial from his family's stories. He hadn't simply feared my strength.

"You thought Vaela would uncover something about the Council."

Evander nodded.

“Yes.”

My anger returned. Evander had chosen to suppress my first shift because he was afraid of what Vaela might discover. He’d repeated the same kind of choice his grandfather had once fought against.

“What were you trying to keep hidden?”

Evander looked at me.

“I didn’t know.”

I didn’t believe that was the entire truth.

“You used wolfsbane on me because of something you didn’t know?”

The Valdy secret-

“knew enough.”

Caius’s attention remained on him.

“Then tell us what you knew

Evander took a moment before answering. His family had carried a warning alongside the old promise. If the Celestial wolf ever began uncovering memories, the Keepers would return.

“Return from where?”

“I don’t know.”

Pryor looked down at the Valdyr name again. The Keeper order had disappeared from official Council records centuries ago, but that didn’t mean the families had stopped carrying out their duties. Some could have continued without the Council knowing.

“Did Orin ever contact you again?”

“Once.”

I leaned closer.

“When?”

“Five years after you woke.”

I thought immediately about what Helene had told us. A dark haired stranger had come to Ashcrest when

I was around five and asked whether the child Derek had taken in was healthy. We had never known who he was.

“What did Orin look like?”

Evander described a man with dark hair who appeared to be around forty. I looked at Caius. He had already made the same connection.

“Helene saw him.”

Evander frowned.

“Where?”

“At Ashcrest.”

For once, Evander looked genuinely surprised. Orin hadn’t told him he’d found me. That meant the Valdyr had been watching me without Evander knowing.

“Why would he check on me?”

Evander stared at the Valdyr name.

“To make sure you survived.”

I thought about the stranger leaving after learning I was healthy. He hadn’t tried to take me or speak to me. He’d only wanted confirmation.

The Valdy secret-

“Where is Orin now?”

Evander shook his head.

“I don’t know.”

Caius looked at Pryor.

“Find his Council visit.”

Pryor nodded. If Orin had entered the Council grounds twenty years ago, there might still be a record showing where he’d come from. It was a better lead than searching territories without direction.

I looked back at Evander.

“Is Orin the only Valdyr you’ve met?”

Evander hesitated.

“No.”

I waited.

“Who else?”

Evander’s eyes met mine.

“His son.”

That changed our search. Even if Orin was no longer alive, his son could still be carrying whatever the Valdyr family had protected through generations. He might also know why his father had watched me after I woke.

I stood beside Caius.

“What’s his name?”

Evander looked at the Keeper records before answering.

“Halvon.”

I froze.

I knew that name.

So did Caius.

Councilor Halvon.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 296

The Valdyr Bloodline

(Isla)

Halvon.

I knew far too much about that name fox it to mean nothing. Caius had warned me about him before the High Council ever came to Wraithbone. Halvon had wanted uncertainty around me because uncertainty gave him something he could use.

Now Evander was telling us Halvon was Orin Valdyr's son.

"Halvon is a Valdyr?"

Evander looked at me.

"Yes."

I looked at Caius. He didn't seem surprised that I remembered everything we'd learned about Halvon before the Council arrived. We'd spent days preparing for those wolves and what each of them wanted from me.

"He served on the Council with you."

Evander nodded.

"He did."

That made the connection worse. Evander had known about the Valdyr family while sitting on the same Council as Halvon. They had both been there while questions about my bond, my mark, and my place as a Celestial were being discussed.

"Did you know who his father was then?"

"Yes."

I stared at him. Evander had kept that from everyone while Halon helped shape the Council's position concerning me. There was no chance I was dismissing that as unimportant.

Caius moved nearer to the table.

"Did Halvon know about your family's connection to the Keepers?"

Evander didn't answer right away.

"I believe so."

Pryor closed the record in front of him. He looked toward the Valdyr name again before reaching for another book. Halvon's family had been sitting in those records while we'd been looking for answers elsewhere.

I remembered the days Calus spent preparing me for the High Council. He'd told me Halvon would push harder than Sorin and make his questions sound reasonable. He'd also told me Halvon wanted

Wraithbone distracted.

The Valdy Bloodline

At the time, we'd believed his reasons were political.

"Halvon wanted the old Celestial laws challenged."

Evander looked at me

"Yes."

I remembered it clearly. Halvon had led the faction that questioned whether laws written centuries ago should still control what happened with a Celestial wolf. He'd wanted the uncertainty to continue.

"Was that because I'm Celestial?"

Evarider watched me.

"I can't answer for Halvon."

I didn't like that answer, but it was probably true. Whatever Evander knew about the Valdyrs didn't mean Halvon had shared his plans with him. They could have sat on the same Council for years without trusting each other.

Caius looked at Evander.

"Did Halvon ever speak to you about Isla before the Council came to Wraithbone?"

"Yes."

I leaned closer.

"What did he ask?"

Evander thought before answering. Halvon had wanted to know how much the Council actually knew about Celestial wolves. He'd also asked whether any old records had been found concerning the return of one.

"Before you questioned me about Vaela?"

"Before."

That changed something. Halvon had already been asking about Celestials before Evander came to our door with his strange question. His interest hadn't started when the Council arrived at Wraithbone.

"Did you tell him about the question your father taught you?"

"No."

I studied Evander's face, If he was telling the truth, Halvon hadn't learned about Vaela through him. That meant could have come directly through the Valdyr family.

Pr

The Valdy Bloodline

"Everything you can find."

Pryor nodded. Orin had visited the Council around the time I woke, then appeared in Ashcrest years later to make sure I was alive, Somewhere between those events, he had also raised a son who eventually became a Council member.

I thought about Halvon sitting across from me.

All those questions.

All that interest in what my existence meant for the old laws.

we'd misunderstood what he wanted.

Halvon have been trying to stop the Council from controlling me?"

considered it.

ssibly."

didn't like how easily that possibility fit. Halvon had opposed Sorin's attempts to force a clear timeline around my bond. At the time, we'd believed he wanted uncertainty because it weakened Wraithbone politically.

But uncertainty had also delayed the Council's control over me.

Vaela moved inside me.

'Don't trust him yet.'

'I don't.'

That was one thing I wasn't going to do. Orin checking on me as a child didn't prove the Valdyrs were protecting me. The letter had already warned us that not every Keeper protected me.

I looked at Evander.

"What did Orin teach Halvon?"

Evander shook his head.

"I don't know."

Caius watched him.

"But you know something."

Evand of the door before returning his attention to us. He seemed to be deciding how much ally mattered. Finally, he looked at the Keeper records.

otten its place."

He believed the Council was created to protect order, not control Celestials."

That sounded very different from Varen. Varen had feared what a Celestial could become outside Council control. Orin apparently believed the Council had no right to control one at all.

"And Halvon believes the same thing?"

"I don't know."

Again, we reached the same problem. Orin's beliefs didn't automatically belong to his son. Halvon could have erited his family's knowledge without sharing their reasons for protecting it.

ked up the Valdyr record.

Halvon."

dat him.

ore we leave here?”

efore he knows we’re looking.”

understood immediately. If Halvon had spent years hiding his connection to the Keepers, we couldn’t give him time to prepare. We needed to know where he was before anyone contacted him.

Pryor stood.

“I can send a request through the Council.”

Caius shook his head.

“No warning.”

Pryor understood. He could search the Council’s records without contacting Halvon directly. If Halvon had recently attended a meeting or returned to his territory, there would be something showing it.

I turned back to Evander.

“One more question.”

He waited.

“Did Halvon know who I was before the rest of the Council did?”

Evander looked at me for several seconds.

“I don’t know.”

ter.

von’s interest in me came from politics. He wanted Wraithbone Ns challenged. He wanted uncertainty where Sorin wanted control.

The Valdy Bloodline

Halvon might have known exactly what bloodline I came from long before he ever sat across from me.

And if Orin had passed the Keeper truth to his son, Halvon might know far more about Vaela than Evander ever did.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 297

Before Halvon Knows

(Isla)

We left Evander with the guards and followed Pryor back through the prison. I wanted answers from Halvon before he learned we had connected him to the Valdyr family. If Orin had passed anything down to his son, Halvon had kept it hidden through every meeting we'd had with him. I wanted to know why.

Outside, Pryor stopped beside Zeron and Raith. He explained what we needed without mentioning the Keepers where the guards could hear. There was no reason for anyone outside our group to know what we'd discovered yet. Halvon had enough connections within the Council to hear things quickly.

"How long will it take?"

Pryor looked at Caius.

"A few hours."

Caius nodded.

"Do it from Wraithbone."

I agreed with that decision. Using the Council prison to search for Halvon could raise questions before we were ready. We had the Valdyr name now, and that gave Pryor somewhere specific to begin. I followed Caius toward the others.

The journey back gave me too much time to think. Halvon had been one of the wolves I'd prepared for before the High Council came to Wraithbone. Caius had taught me how he worked and what he wanted. None of us had known there was another reason to watch him.

Vaela remained close.

'His father watched us.'

'I know.'

That bothered me more than I wanted to admit. Orin had gone to Ashcrest when I was a child and asked Helene whether I was healthy. He had known exactly where I was while I knew nothing about him.

‘He could have taken us.’

I thought about that.

‘But he didn’t.’

That mattered. Orin had apparently wanted proof that I’d survived, then left without coming near me. Whatever the Valdyrs wanted, taking me hadn’t been part of it then.

We reached Wraithbone later that day. Pryor went directly to the Council records while Zeron and Raith returned to their duties. Caius carried the black box upstairs with us rather than leaving it with anyone else. Neither of us trusted the Council archives with it.

I sat near the table while Caius placed the box down. The letter inside had started everything that brought us to Evander. Now the same message was pointing toward Halvon. I wondered how many more secrets had been passed between families without ever reaching the Council records.

“Do you think Halvon knew?”

Caius looked at me.

“About you?”

“Before he came here.”

Caius thought about it before answering. Halvon had shown interest in the Celestial laws before the Council arrived, but that wasn’t proof he’d known I was the child Orin had searched for. His actions could still have been political at the beginning.

“But you think it’s possible.”

“Yes.”

I looked toward the black box. If Halvon had known who I was, he’d watched Sorin argue over my bond while keeping that knowledge to himself. He’d watched the Council discuss laws connected to Celestials. He’d never once mentioned his father.

A knock came at the door.

“Come in.”

Pryor entered carrying several pages. He crossed directly to the table and placed them in front of Caius. The search had apparently given him more than we'd expected.

"I found Halvon."

I stood.

"Where?"

"His home territory."

That made more sense. Halvon had represented the western pack alliance during his time on the Council. Caius had taught me that before the High Council ever came to Wraithbone.

"When did he return?"

"Three days ago."

Caius read the page.

"Why?"

"The record doesn't say."

That didn't surprise me. Halvon didn't need to explain every visit to his own territory. What mattered was that Pryor knew where he was and we could reach him.

"Does he know about Evander?"

Pryor shook his head.

"Not from me."

I looked at Caius. We couldn't know whether someone else had contacted Halvon, but there was no reason to assume they had. Our visit to Evander hadn't been announced.

Pryor moved another page forward.

"There's more."

I looked down. The record showed Orin Valdyr's name beside several old Council visits. The last one had taken place years after his visit to Ashcrest.

“What was he doing there?”

“No reason was recorded.”

That seemed to happen often with Orin. He appeared, spoke to someone, then left without creating much of a record. Either he’d known how to avoid attention or someone had helped him.

Pryor pointed farther down.

“Halvon was there.”

I looked at him.

“At the Council?”

“On the same day.”

Halvon hadn’t been a Council member yet. According to the dates, he had been young but old enough to travel with his father. Orin hadn’t kept him away from Council matters.

Caius looked at the entry.

“So Orin was already teaching him.”

“Most likely.”

I thought about what Evander had told us. Orin believed the Council had forgotten its place. If he’d brought Halvon there while teaching him the Valdyr history, Halvon might have grown up knowing things that had been erased from official records.

“What happened to Orin?”

Pryor turned over the final page.

“He disappeared.”

I stared at him.

“When?”

“Seventeen years ago.”

That would have been only a few years after Orin came to Ashcrest looking for me. There was no death recorded and no territory listed for him afterward. He simply stopped appearing anywhere Pryor could trace.

“Could he still be alive?”

“Yes.”

That gave us another problem. We’d been talking about Orin as though Halvon was the only Valdyr left who could answer our questions. We didn’t actually know that.

Caius looked at Pryor.

“Does Halvon have any other family?”

“None listed.”

I thought about that answer. Halvon had spent years serving on the Council while keeping his family history private. If Orin was alive, he might have been doing the same thing somewhere

Before Halvon Knows else.

Vaela moved inside me.

‘Find the son first.’

I agreed. Halvon was the person we could reach now. Chasing Orin without knowing whether he was alive could wait.

“We go to Halvon’s territory.”

Caius looked at me.

“Tomorrow morning.”

I nodded. That gave us time to prepare without giving Halvon enough time to hear that we were searching for him. Pryor could continue tracing Orin tonight.

Pryor gathered the pages but left the one showing Halvon’s location. Before leaving, he looked at the black box. His attention stayed there for a moment.

“I’ll search the Valdyr name too.”

“Every version of it.”

Pryor nodded and left. I sat again after the door closed. Tomorrow we’d be facing a wolf who had once sat across from me while I tried to understand what he wanted.

This time, I knew what to ask.

Caius opened the black box and removed the silver seal. Evander's family had broken with the Keepers to protect me. The Valdyrs had remained loyal, but we still didn't know what they had remained loyal to.

I touched the Keeper symbol carved into the lid.

Tomorrow Halvon could finally answer that.

And if he couldn't, I wanted to know why his father had spent years watching me.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 298

The keeper's son

(Isla)

We left Wraithbone the next morning with Pryor, Zeron, and Raith traveling with us. Caius had the black box again, along with the records Pryor had found the night before. Nobody had contacted Halvon to tell him we were coming. I preferred it that way.

The journey into the western territories took several hours. I had never traveled this far west before, and under different circumstances I might have enjoyed seeing somewhere new. Instead, I kept thinking about Halvon and the Council meetings at Wraithbone. I wondered how much he'd known while sitting across from me.

Vaela came closer.

'He'll know why we're there.'

'Probably.'

'Watch him.'

'I will.'

We crossed into Halvon's home territory before midday. The guards at the border recognized Caius and immediately sent word ahead. We hadn't tried to hide our arrival once we reached his territory. There was no point now.

One of the guards approached.

"Councilor Halvon is at the main pack house."

Caius looked at him.

“Take us there.”

The guard nodded and led the way. I noticed he’d still called Halvon Councilor even though he wasn’t currently sitting in a Council meeting. Years in that position had made the title part of who he was to the wolves here. I wondered how much his territory knew about the Valdyrs.

We reached the pack house less than an hour later. Several wolves were waiting outside, including the territory’s Alpha. He greeted Caius first before looking at me. Nothing about our arrival seemed to have been expected.

“Is Halvon inside?”

The Alpha nodded.

“He is.”

Caius didn’t explain why we’d come. The Alpha didn’t ask either, though his face showed that he wanted to. He led us inside and sent someone to find Halvon. We waited in a meeting room near the entrance.

Pryor placed the records on the table. The black box remained with Caius while Zeron and Raith stood near the door. I sat beside Pryor and looked at the Keeper symbol on the first page. Halvon would recognize it if Evander had told us the truth.

Footsteps came from the hallway.

The door opened.

Halvon entered alone. His attention went to Caius before moving to me, then Pryor. He stopped when he noticed the records on the table.

“Alpha King.”

Caius remained where he was.

“Sit.”

Halvon looked at him for a moment before taking the chair across from us. He didn’t ask why we’d traveled all this way to see him. That interested me. Most wolves would have asked immediately.

I watched him.

“Do you know why we’re here?”

Halvon looked at me.

“No.”

I didn’t believe him. Maybe he didn’t know exactly what we’d found, but something about the records had already caught his attention. I reached for the page with the Keeper symbol.

“Do you recognize this?”

Halvon looked down.

“Yes.”

There was no hesitation. He hadn’t tried to pretend the symbol meant nothing. I glanced at Caius before returning my attention to Halvon.

“What is it?”

Halvon looked at Pryor.

“You already know.”

Pryor didn’t answer him. Halvon’s eyes returned to me. I could see him beginning to understand why we’d come.

“The Keepers.”

Halvon sat back.

“So you found them.”

That answer told me more than I expected.

“You knew we were searching?”

“No.”

I pointed toward the symbol.

“Then what did you mean?”

Halvon looked at me for several seconds. He seemed to be deciding whether there was any reason left to keep denying what he knew. Finally, his attention moved to the black box.

“Where did you find that?”

I remembered Evander asking almost the same question.

“Do you recognize it?”

“Yes.”

Caius placed the box on the table.

“How?”

Halvon looked at the symbol carved into the lid. Something passed through his face that I couldn’t understand. He reached toward it before stopping himself.

“My father made it.”

I stared at him.

“Orin?”

Halvon’s eyes came directly to mine.

“How do you know that name?”

Now I had his full attention. I hadn’t expected the box itself to belong to Orin. If Halvon was telling the truth, his father hadn’t simply watched what happened to me.

“He visited Ashcrest.”

Halvon became still.

“When?”

“When I was five.”

Surprise crossed Halvon’s face. He hadn’t known about the visit. Orin had apparently kept things from his own son too.

I opened the box.

Halvon stared at the letter.

Then he saw the silver seal.

His face changed.

“Where did you get that?”

“It was inside.”

Halvon looked at the seal without touching it. I could tell he recognized the family name carved into it. What I couldn’t tell was whether seeing it frightened him.

“Whose was it?”

Halvon raised his eyes.

“Evander’s grandfather.”

I already knew that.

“Why was it beside me?”

Halvon looked at Caius, then Pryor. He understood now that we’d discovered far more than the Keeper symbol. There was little reason left for him to hide his family connection.

“Because it proved who helped my father.”

I stared at him.

“Helped him do what?”

“Hide you.”

That changed everything again. Evander had told us his grandfather helped remove me from Garron. Halvon was saying Orin had been part of it too.

“Your father helped put me into protected sleep.”

Halvon nodded.

“He did.”

Vaela came forward.

‘He knows.’

I kept my attention on Halvon.

“Who else was there?”

“I don’t know every name.”

Caius leaned toward the table.

“Give us the ones you do know.”

Halvon looked at him.

“Three Keepers helped remove her from the Thornes.”

He explained that Orin had been the youngest of them. Evander’s grandfather had arranged the removal after discovering what Varen intended. A third Keeper had prepared the chamber.

“Who was the third?”

Halvon looked at me.

“Maelor.”

I didn’t recognize the name. Neither did Vaela. Pryor immediately opened one of the records and began searching.

“Family name?”

“Serath.”

Pryor stopped.

His finger rested on an entry.

I leaned closer. Maelor Serath appeared among the Keeper names. Unlike Evander’s ancestor, there was no mark beside his name showing that he’d broken his oath.

“He remained a Keeper.”

Halvon nodded.

“Yes.”

That didn’t make sense. If Maelor helped hide me from Varen, why hadn’t he been marked as having betrayed the order? Unless his part had never been discovered.

“Where is the Serath family now?”

Halvon looked at me.

“Gone.”

I didn’t like how quickly he answered.

“All of them?”

“As far as I know.”

Caius watched him.

“And your father?”

Halvon looked away.

I remembered what Pryor had found. Orin had disappeared seventeen years ago without any record of his death. This was the question I wanted answered most.

“Is Orin alive?”

Halvon looked at me again.

“Yes.”

Nobody spoke.

Pryor stopped searching the records. Caius’s attention remained fixed on Halvon. Even Vaela became completely quiet inside me.

“Where is he?”

Halvon hesitated.

That was enough.

“You know.”

His eyes remained on mine.

“I know where he was the last time I saw him.”

I stood.

“When?”

Halvon looked at the black box his father had made centuries after my disappearance, then back at me.

“Three months ago.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 299

Waiting to be und

4obody spoke after Halvon answered. Three months wasn't long enough for without leaving some kind of trail. If Halvön had seen him that recently, wet finding him. I wanted to know why he'd stayed hidden when he knew I was

"Where did you see him? I asked. Vaela remained close inside me, listening we finally had someone who knew where Orin had been. I wasn't leaving without a location

Halvon rested his hands on the table. "North of here, beyond the western alliance bords. He knew exactly where his father had gone. "He was living near a territory called Ravenspire

Pryor reached for one of the records. "Ravenspire isn't part of the western alliance. He searched several pages until he found it. "It's independent and rarely deals with the Council"

"Why would Orin live there?" I asked. The name meant nothing to me, but there were still territories I'd never visited. Orin had disappeared from Council records seventeen years ago. Ravenspire could explain how he'd managed it.

Halvon leaned back in his chair. "Ravenspire doesn't ask many questions." The Council rarely paid attention to the territory. "My father knew he could live there without attracting attention."

Caius remained beside me. "Why was he hiding?" Orin had spent seventeen years avoiding the Council and anyone who might search its records. That was too long to be only about privacy.

Halvon took a moment before answering. "Someone was looking for him." Orin had become careful about where he traveled and who knew his location. "He believed someone discovered he was still alive."

I thought about the Keepers who had chosen Varen centuries ago. If their families survived, Orin might have known they were still protecting the same secrets. Someone could have spent years searching for him because of what he knew. Finding him had become more important.

"Who was looking for him?" I asked. There had already been enough secrets between these families. If Orin feared someone finding him, I wanted to know who. Halvon was our best chance of learning that now.

Halvon looked directly at me. “He never gave me a name.” His father had only warned him that old loyalties survived through generations. “He believed some families still followed what Varen started.”

Vaela came closer inside me. The letter had warned that not every Keeper protected me, and now

Waging to be found that warning mattered even more. Varen was dead, but the beliefs he’d created could have survived him. We needed to know which families had carried them forward.

“Was Maelor one of them?” I asked. He’d helped place me into protected sleep, yet his Keeper record didn’t show a broken oath. If he’d acted against Varen, the records should have shown it.

Halvon could finally explain why they didn’t.

Halvon shook his head. “Maetor hid what he did.” The Keeper order never discovered that he’d helped Orin and Evander’s grandfather. “They believed he remained loyal until his death.”

Pryor looked down at Maelor’s name. “Then that’s why there was no mark.” He made a note beside the entry. “Nobody discovered his part in hiding Isla.”

“Did Maelor leave anything behind?” I asked. If he’d helped create the chamber, he might have known more about my protected sleep than anyone else. His descendants could have inherited that knowledge. I wanted to know whether Orin had ever mentioned them.

Halvon considered the question. “My father believed Maelor’s bloodline survived.” He had never been told where the descendants lived or what name they used. “Orin refused to tell me more.”

Pryor opened the Keeper record again. “Then the Seraths may have changed their family name.” He checked the later entries before turning another page. “That would explain why their name disappears.”

“Will your father talk to us?” I asked. Finding him wouldn’t help if he refused to answer anything. He’d spent seventeen years avoiding the Council and keeping his location hidden. I needed to know whether seeing me would change that.

Halvon’s expression changed. “He’ll speak to you.” There was certainty in his answer. “He’s been waiting for you.”

I stared at him. Orin had checked on me when I was five, then disappeared from every record Pryor could find. He’d known I’d survived and still hadn’t contacted me. I couldn’t understand why waiting had been so important.

“Then why didn’t he come to me?” I asked. News about me had traveled through the territories for months. Orin could have found Wraithbone if he’d wanted to. Instead, he’d remained hidden.

Halvon stayed where he was. “Because you had to find him.” His father believed approaching me would repeat the mistakes the Keepers had made centuries ago. “He wanted the choice to be yours.”

I understood what he meant, even if I didn’t completely agree with it. Orin had watched from a distance and waited for me to start searching on my own. Everything we’d uncovered had

Wating to be found eventually led us to Halvon. Now Halvon could lead us to his father.

Caius picked up the black box. “We’re going to Ravenspire.” Finding Orin mattered more than anything else we could learn here. “We leave tomorrow morning.”

Halvon turned toward Caius. “I’ll take you to where I met him.” He knew the route and wouldn’t need to ask anyone in Ravenspire for directions. “If he’s still there, we’ll find him.”

I wasn’t ready to trust Halvon because he was helping us. There were still questions about his choices while serving on the Council and why he’d challenged the old Celestial laws. Orin might finally explain some of them. Until then, Halvon was coming with us.

“You’re coming,” I said. I wanted him there when we spoke to Orin. Father and son carried different pieces of the same history. I intended to hear both.

Halvon nodded once. “I expected that.” He didn’t argue about accompanying us. “There’s something else you should know before we go.”

Waited for him to continue. Vaela became more attentive inside me. Halvon had saved something until now, which meant he thought it mattered. I wondered whether it explained why

Orin had chosen Ravenspire.

“My father didn’t disappear only because someone was searching for him,” Halvon said. There was another reason he’d remained near Ravenspire for so many years. “He chose that place because of what was there.” He gave us nothing more.

“What is there?” I asked. Whatever Orin had found was important enough to keep him hidden for seventeen years. It could be connected to the Keepers or my protected sleep. I wanted the truth before we traveled there.

Halvon met my eyes. “I don’t know exactly.” Orin had refused to explain that part even to his son. “He only told me he couldn’t leave it unprotected.”

Caius stayed beside me. “Then we’ll ask him ourselves.” We had a location and someone who knew the way. “Tomorrow we find Orin.”

I looked at the Keeper records spread across the table. Orin had helped hide me, checked on me after I woke, and spent years protecting knowledge the Council had lost. Now we knew something near Ravenspire had kept him there. Tomorrow we would find out what.

Tomorrow we would go to Ravenspire. Orin had spent years waiting for me to find him instead of deciding when I was ready for the truth. I had made that choice now. This time, I intended to get the answers from him.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 300

The Road to Ravenspire

The Road to Ravenspire

(sla)

We left Halvon’s territory early the next morning. Halvon traveled with us while Pryor, Zeron, and/ Raith came as well. Caius kept the black box with him, and Pryor carried the records we’d need if Orin started giving us names. By the time we crossed the western alliance border, I was ready to finally meet the wolf who had helped hide me.

Ravenspire looked different from the territories we’d crossed before reaching it. There were no Council markers along the road and no guards waiting at a formal border. A few wolves noticed us, passing, but none approached. Halvon seemed familiar with the route.

“How much farther?” I asked. We’d already traveled for hours since leaving his territory. The road ahead disappeared between two hills. I couldn’t see anything beyond them.

Halvon pointed toward the higher one. “Another hour from there.” His father hadn’t lived inside Ravenspire itself. “He chose a place beyond the main settlement.”

Caius studied the land ahead. “Does Ravenspire know he’s there?” He had been watching the wolves we passed since entering the territory. None seemed concerned about strangers traveling through.

Halvon shook his head. “Some probably do.” Ravenspire had always allowed wolves to live outside its main settlements without demanding much from them. “Nobody cared enough to question him.”

of

That explained why Orin had chosen this place. He could remain among wolves without becoming part a pack that kept records of everyone living within its borders. The Council wouldn’t have any reason to search here either. Seventeen years could pass easily if nobody was keeping track.

‘He knew how to disappear, Vaela said.

There was curiosity in her voice rather than concern. I wondered what she would think when we finally stood face to face with Orin.

‘He’d done it before,’ I answered. Orin had hidden his connection to my protected sleep for centuries. Disappearing from Council records seventeen years ago probably hadn’t been difficult for him. The harder question was why he’d needed to do it then.

We continued beyond the hills until the road became narrower. Trees covered most of the land now, with only occasional houses appearing between them. Halvon eventually directed us away from the main road. We followed a smaller path deeper into the territory.

The Road to Ravenspire

Pryor looked around as we traveled. “There aren’t any settlements marked this far north.” The rop he’d brought showed nothing except forest beyond this point. “Whatever is out here isn’t in Council records.”

Halvon continued ahead. “That’s why my father chose it.” He’d apparently brought Halvor along, this same path three months earlier. “We’re close now.”

I looked toward Caius. He hadn’t said much since we’d entered Ravenspire, but I knew he was watching everything. Zeron and Raith were doing the same behind us. None of us knew what we would find at the end of this path.

The trees finally opened into a large clearing. A small stone house stood near the other side with a second building farther behind it. There were no other homes nearby. Nothing about the place suggested someone had lived there for seventeen years protecting an old secret.

“That’s it?” I asked. I had expected something more difficult to reach after everything Halvon told us. Instead, the house looked completely ordinary. Maybe that was the point.

Halvon stopped. “That’s where I saw him.” He hadn’t contacted Orin before bringing us here. “If he hasn’t moved, he’ll be inside.”

Caius stepped closer to me. “Stay beside me.” His attention moved toward the second building behind the house. “We don’t know what he’s guarding.”

nodded and followed him toward the house. Halvon walked several steps ahead while Pryor remained behind us with Zeron and Raith. Vaela became more aware with every step. I could feel her searching for something familiar.

‘Anything?’ I asked. She had recognized things connected to my past before I understood them myself. If something here carried memories from three centuries ago, I wondered whether she could feel it.

‘Not yet,’ Vaela answered. She remained near the surface as we approached the house. ‘But someone is inside.’ I felt it too a moment later.

Halvon stopped outside the door. He didn’t knock immediately. Something about returning here seemed different for him now that we were standing behind him. Then he raised his hand.

“Father.” Halvon knocked three times. He waited before trying again. “It’s me.”

Nothing happened for several seconds. I heard movement somewhere inside, then footsteps approaching the door. Vaela became completely focused. My own attention followed hers.

The door opened.

The man standing there had dark hair mixed with gray and looked older than Halvon, though not

The Road to Ravenspire nearly old enough to have lived three centuries. That meant very little among wolves who had found ways to extend their lives. His eyes went first to his son. Then they found me.

Orin didn’t speak. His attention stayed on my face as though he’d been expecting to see it again. I remembered Helene describing the dark haired stranger who had come to Ashcrest when I was five. The wolf standing before me had to be him.

“Orin Valdyr?” I asked. There were hundreds of questions I could have started with. His name seemed like the simplest place. I wanted to hear him confirm it himself.

Orin finally moved. “Islalienne.” Hearing my full name from him affected me more than I expected.

“You found me.”

I held his gaze. He didn’t seem surprised to see me, which meant Halvon had been right. Orin really had been waiting. I wasn’t sure whether that made me angry or curious.

“You knew I would?” I asked. He’d left me to uncover three centuries of secrets without knowing where they would lead. Now I wanted to understand why. I wanted to know what he’d expected me to find.

Orin stepped away from the doorway. “I hoped you would.” His attention moved briefly toward Caius and the others behind me. “Come inside.”

I didn’t move yet. The second building behind the house had caught my attention again. Vaela had noticed it too.

‘There,’ she said. Something about the building had changed her immediately. I felt recognition moving through her even though I didn’t understand it. Whatever Orin had spent seventeen years protecting was inside.

I looked past him. “What’s in that building?” The question came before anything else I had planned to ask. Vaela was too focused on it for me to ignore. I waited for Orin’s answer.

Orin followed my attention toward the building. “Something that belongs to you.” He stepped outside and closed the door behind him. “Something I promised would still be here when you came.”

Vaela came closer. I stared at the stone building, wondering what could have waited there for three centuries. Orin started walking toward it without another word. I followed him.