The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 301

What My Father Left Behind

What My Father Left Behind sla)

Orin led us across the clearing toward the second building. It was made from the same gray stone as the house, but there were no windows along its walls. The only entrance was a wooden doo with symbols carved around the frame. I recognized one of them immediately.

“The Keeper symbol.” I stopped near the entrance and studied the other marks around it. Some looked familiar from Pryor’s records, while others meant nothing to me. “What are the others?”

Orin removed a small key from his pocket. “Protection marks.” He placed the key into the lock but, didn’t turn it yet. “Maelor carved them when this place was prepared.”

I looked at the building again. Maelor had helped create the chamber where I’d remained in protected sleep for almost three centuries. If he’d also prepared this place, whatever waited inside had been protected since around the same time. Orin had only returned here seventeen years ago.

“How long has this been here?” I asked. The stone gave me no clue about its age. Ravenspire had apparently been hiding something connected to my past long before Orin chose to live nearby. “Was it built before I was hidden?”

Orin turned the key. “Yes.” He opened the door and stepped aside. “We needed somewhere to keep what couldn’t remain with you.”

I looked through the doorway. Shelves lined the walls, and several larger objects had been covered with cloth. Boxes filled the spaces between old books and sealed containers. Nothing immediately told me what Orin had spent seventeen years protecting.

Caius remained beside me. “Everything in there is connected to Isla?” His attention stayed on Orin. “Or does some of it belong to the Keepers?”

Orin entered ahead of us. “Both.” He stopped near the first row of shelves. “Some things were already here before Islalienne was placed into protected sleep.”

I followed with Caius while Pryor came behind us. Halvon remained near the entrance with Zeron and Raith. The building was larger inside than it had appeared from the clearing. There were enough records here to keep Pryor busy for weeks.

I stopped near a shelf holding several smaller boxes. Each one carried a different symbol, but one had my full name written across the front. Islalienne. I forgot about everything else around me.

“Why is my name on that?” I asked. The letters had faded in places, but there was no mistaking them. Someone had prepared the box specifically for me. “What’s inside?”

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Orin stayed several steps away. “Things that belonged to your parents.” He didn’t reach for the box “They were brought here after you were taken.”

I stared at it. I’d found Lyrienne and learned about Darius through the stories she’d saved for me, but this was something different. These were pieces from the life my parents had been preparing for me before Corvin took me away. Some of those pieces had survived all this time.

I raised my hand but stopped before touching the box. Vaela said nothing, though I could feel her attention on it with mine. Her gift could pull memories from objects connected to the past. I didn’t know what this one might show us.

“How well did you know my parents?” I asked. Orin had been there during the years before Corvin took me, which meant he might remember things Lyrienne had never known about. Darius had also been involved with the Keepers somehow. “You said my father was part of why you helped me.”

Orin nodded. “I knew Darius well.” His expression changed when he said my father’s name. “He came to me before you were born because he no longer trusted Varen.”

That caught my attention. Lyrienne had told me about Darius as a father waiting impatiently for his daughter, making a cradle and carving wooden animals. She hadn’t told me he’d been investigating Varen before my birth. Maybe she hadn’t known.

“What did Darius tell you?” I asked. My father had apparently understood that something was wrong long before Corvin acted. If he had gone to Orin himself, he’d already been trying to protect me. “What was he afraid of?”

Orin looked toward the shelves of Keeper records. “He knew Varen had become interested in Celestial children.” Darius had learned enough to understand that the interest wasn’t harmless. “He believed Varen would eventually come for you.”

Pryor went toward the records but didn’t open anything. “Did Darius know the Keepers were divided?” His attention remained on Orin while he waited. “How much did you tell him?”

Orin crossed to one of the larger covered objects. “Enough to know he couldn’t trust all of us.” He removed the cloth and revealed a wooden chest. “That’s why he prepared something without telling the Council.”

I went toward the chest. A carving covered the center of the lid, showing a wolf surrounded by symbols I didn’t recognize. This wasn’t something collected after Darius died. He had prepared it himself.

“What did he leave?” I asked. My hands remained at my sides even though I wanted to touch it immediately. Darius had made things for me before I was born, but this felt different from the

What My Father Left Behind wooden wolf Lyrienne had given me. “Why did he hide it here?”

Orin looked at the carving. “He gave Maelor instructions.” If anything happened to Darius, the chest was to remain sealed until I returned. “He didn’t trust anyone else with what was inside.”

Caius studied the chest. “Nobody has opened it since?” He looked toward Orin rather than touching it. “Not even you?”

Orin shook his head. “I couldn’t.” He stepped away from the chest to give me access. “Darius made sure only his blood could open it.”

I stood in front of it. My father had prepared this before I was taken, believing there was a chance he wouldn’t be there when I finally needed it. Lyrienne had spent centuries searching for me while this chest waited in Ravenspire. Darius had found another way to leave something behind.

‘Touch it, Vaela said.

I placed my palm against the carving. Warmth spread beneath my hand almost immediately, followed by a sound from somewhere inside the chest. I removed my hand and looked down. The lock had opened.

Nobody spoke while I reached for the lid. Whatever Darius had placed inside had waited more than three centuries for his daughter to find it. I thought about the father I’d never had the chance to know and the mother I’d finally found again. Then I opened the chest.

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Chapter 302

What Darius Left Behind

What Darius Left Behind sla)

Inside the chest were several wrapped bundles, two books, and a small wooden case. Nothing looked valuable enough to explain why Darius had gone to so much trouble to protect it. I reached. for the first bundle and carefully opened the cloth around it. A stack of letters rested inside.

My name was written across the first one.

I picked it up and recognized nothing about the handwriting. Still, knowing Darius had written those letters for me made my fingers pause against the paper. He'd prepared them believing there was a chance he wouldn't be there to give them to me himself.

"These are from him?" I asked. There had to be more than twenty letters in the bundle. Some were marked with numbers rather than dates. "He wrote all of these?"

Orin nodded. "Darius started writing them before you were born." He stayed away from the chest while I looked through them. "He continued after your birth."

opened the first letter but didn't read beyond the first few words. I wanted Lyrienne with me when I went through them properly. She deserved to see what Darius had left behind too. I placed the letter carefully back with the others.

Caius looked into the chest. "What are the books?" He didn't reach for them. "Were those Darius's too?"

Orin came nearer. "One belonged to Darius." He pointed toward the darker book beneath it. "The other belonged to Maelor."

Pryor immediately became interested in the second one. He'd spent weeks searching Council records for anything connected to the Keepers. A book Maelor had kept himself could answer questions the Council archives never could. He still waited for me to decide what happened with

"You can read it," I said. Maelor had protected me when other Keepers wanted me controlled. Whatever he'd recorded might help us identify the families Orin feared. "But it comes back to

Wraithbone with us."

Pryor nodded. "I'll make copies of anything important." He picked up Maelor's book and held it carefully. "The original stays with you."

I reached deeper into the chest and removed the wooden case. It opened easily, unlike the chest itself. Inside was a small metal pendant shaped like a wolf. A familiar symbol had been carved into

What Danus Left Behind its back.

knew that symbol.

It was the same one !yrienne had shown me when she told me about Darius's family. I picked up the pendant and turned it between my fingers. This had belonged to my father.

"Did he wear this?" I asked. I remembered Lyrienne describing Darius, but hearing something from a wolf who'd actually known him felt different. Örin had seen my father carrying this. "Was it his?"

Orin nodded. "Every day." His attention went to the pendant in my hand. "He gave it to Maelor shortly before Corvin came for you."

I closed my fingers around it. Darius had known enough to prepare for something terrible, but he hadn't known exactly when it would happen. He'd left letters, records, and something he'd worn every day. He'd been trying to leave pieces of himself behind.

"Did he know Corvin was involved?" I asked. We already knew Corvin had taken me and delivered me to Garron Thorne. I wanted to know whether Darius had suspected him before then. "Did my

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father know who was coming?"

Orin shook his head. "Not until it was too late." Darius had suspected wolves close to Varen, but Corvin hadn't been one of the names he'd given Orin. "Corvin had hidden his loyalty well."

I looked at Caius. That fit with everything we'd learned about the way Varen operated. He hadn't needed every wolf around him to know the entire plan. Keeping people separated had allowed the truth to disappear after his death.

I placed the pendant beside the letters and reached for the final bundle. This one was smaller than the others. When I opened it, I found several folded pages covered with names. Some had symbols beside them.

Pryor came nearer. "Keeper families." He recognized several names immediately. "Darius was tracking them."

Orin nodded. "He was trying to learn which ones Varen had turned." Darius had gathered names without involving the Council. "Maelor helped him."

I studied the pages. The Valdyr name was there, along with Evander's family and the Seraths. Several others were unfamiliar. Some had marks beside them that looked different from anything in Pryor's records.

"This is what you were protecting," I said. The letters and Darius's belongings mattered to me, but they weren't why Orin had remained near Ravenspire for seventeen years. These pages could expose families whose connection to Varen had survived. "This is why you stayed."

Whet Danus Left Behind

Orin looked at the names. "Partly." There were other records in the building that expanded on

Darius's list. "I stayed because someone tried to find them seventeen years ago."

That explained when Orin disappeared. Someone had learned these records still existed, forcing him away from the Council and back to Ravenspire. He hadn't simply chosen isolation.

"Who?" I asked. We had spent enough time chašiltig nameless wolves through old records. Darius had already done part of the work for us. "Do you know?".

Orin walked to one of the shelves and removed a thin book. "I know the family." He opened it near the back. "Pryor will recognize the name."

Pryor took the book from him. His eyes moved across the page before stopping. He looked toward Caius.

"The line ended."

I frow th asn't what I'd expected after everything we'd learned. If the family had died out, be carrying Varen's plans. There had to be another reason Orin was concerned.

him. "The recorded line ended." He pointed to another name written beneath it. er survived under another family name.

d the entry again. Whatever he found changed his attention immediately. He closed the nd looked at Orin.

can trace this."

at was enough for me. We didn't need another journey today or another week spent searching ld territories. Pryor could take the records to Wraithbone and follow the family from there. We finally had something more useful than another mystery.

I gathered Darius’s letters and returned them to the chest. “We’re taking these home.” Lyrienne needed to see them, and I wanted to read every letter with her. “All of it.”

Orin nodded. “That’s why I kept it.” He looked around at everything he’d guarded for years. “It was always meant to leave with you.”

I closed had d fin ndant again. For months I’d been following what other wolves

Rodan, and everyone who’d helped bury the truth. Now I e who’d tried to protect me before any of them succeeded.

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Chapter 304

There is Something

There Is Something sla)

I woke before Caius the next morning. For a few seconds, I couldn’t remember where we were, then I saw Darius’s pendant beside the bed. Everything from Ravenspire returned at once. I reached for the pendant and closed my fingers around it.

I felt better than I had the night before. The exhaustion was gone, and my stomach wasn’t bothering me anymore. I decided traveling had simply caught up with me. There was no reason t make more of it.

Caius woke while I was getting dressed. “How do you feel?” His eyes followed me across the room. “Any nausea?”

“I’m fine.” I fastened the pendant around my neck. “Whatever happened last night is gone.” I wasn’

spending another day worrying about it.

Caius sat up. “Sera is still checking you when we get home.” There was no point arguing with the tone he’d used. “I’m not changing my mind.”

I smiled despite myself. “Of course you’re not.” I knew him well enough to understand that once he’d decided something concerned my health, nothing I said would change his decision. “I’ll see

Sera.”

We ate before leaving, and this time the food didn't bother me. Caius watched me finish enough to satisfy him. I pretended not to notice. By the time we joined the others outside, I felt normal again.

Pryor had already returned to Maelor's book. He'd spent part of the night reading and had marked several pages he wanted to compare with the Council records. Orin had also given him copies of

We had enough work waiting for us without traveling anywhere other records from Raven compa else.

Halvon approached before we left. "I'll return to my territory from here." His father was traveling with us to Wraithbone, which meant there was little reason for Halvon to continue. "You know where to find me."

Caius regarded him. "Don't disappear." There were still questions Halvon hadn't answered about his years on the Council. "We'll speak again."

Halvon nodded before leaving with two wolves from his territory who had met us at the settlement. I watched him go without deciding what I thought about him. Finding out he was Orin's son had changed what we knew. It hadn't made him trustworthy.

O ORO

There Is Something

Orin traveled with Pryor for much of the journey. Every time Pryor found something in Maelor's book, another question followed. Orin answered what he could while Zeron and Raith remained nearby. I was grateful I didn't have to spend the entire journey listening to Keeper history.

We reached Wraithbone in the afternoon. Seeing the pack house ahead made me want to get there faster. Darius's letters were coming home with me, along with the records he'd spent years gathering. I wished Lyrienne could already be there when I opened them.

Sera was among the wolves outside when we arrived. She greeted Alpha King Caius respectfully before coming directly to me. I knew she'd want to hear about everything that had happened while we were gone. There was far too much to explain while everyone was still bringing bur things inside.

"I'll tell you everything later," I said. I didn't even know where I would begin. "We found out a lot."

Some of it still didn't feel real to me.

Sera nodded. “I can wait.” Her attention remained on me for another moment. “Alpha King Caius told me you weren’t feeling well last night.”

“I’m fine,” I said. There was no point waiting for her to ask, “I was tired yesterday and one meal smelled terrible.” I felt completely normal now.

Sera studied me for another moment. “Come with me.” She didn’t sound worried, which kept me from becoming concerned. “I want to check you.”

I looked at Caius. He had the good sense not to look pleased about being right. Or maybe he knew I’d be annoyed if he did. Either way, he followed us inside.

Sera took me to the healing room and asked Caius to wait outside. I expected him to object, but he stayed near the door. I sat while Sera asked when the tiredness started and whether I’d felt sick before yesterday. I answered everything as best I could.

“No.” I thought about the past several days. “I’ve been hungrier sometimes, but we’ve also been traveling.” That seemed like an easy explanation.

Sera nodded. “Any changes in your sense of smell?” She began gathering what she needed. “Besides last night’s food.”

I thought about it. There had been moments when scents seemed stronger, but Vaela’s senses had changed since the Celestial Stone. I hadn’t considered that unusual. “Maybe.”

Sera asked several more questions. None seemed important alone, and I started wondering Caius had made such a big deal about this. Then Sera asked about my last cycle. I stopped answering.

Vaela was listening now.

There Is Something

‘Sera knows something.’

knew that too.

I looked at Sera. “Why are you asking me that?” The question had nothing to do with being tired from traveling. “What are you thinking?”

Sera didn’t answer right away. She came closer and placed her hand against my lower abdomen. Her eyes closed while she concentrated. I waited without speaking.

Vaela’s attention turned inward.

She didn’t say anything, but I could feel that she was searching for something. I didn’t understand what had caught her attention. Sera kept her hand where it was.

‘Vaela?’

No answer came.

Sera opened her eyes. The way she looked at me made my heart start beating faster. She didn’t appear worried. Somehow, that made me even more curious.

“What?” I asked. I didn’t want her making me wait. “Tell me.”

Sera sat across from me. “I want to check again before I tell you anything.” She reached for my hand. “I don’t want to give you an answer until I’m certain.”

I stared at her. “An answer about what?” My thoughts were already beginning to move somewhere I hadn’t expected. “Sera?”

“Give me a few minutes.” Sera glanced toward the closed door where Caius was waiting. She turned her attention back to me. “Then we’ll bring Alpha King Caius in.”

I looked down at my stomach.

Vaela finally spoke.

‘There is something.’

My hand went there before I could stop it. I didn’t know what she meant yet. But suddenly, I wasn’t thinking about Ravenspire anymore.

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Chapter 305

Ou Pup

Our Pup sla)

Sera stayed beside me while I tried to understand what Vaela meant. There was something inside me, but those words could mean too many things. I wanted to ask Vaela again, yet she seemed just as unsure as I was. Whatever she’d noticed was new to her too.

Sera reached for a small container from one of the cabinets. “I need to do one more test.” She set it beside me before explaining what she needed. “It won’t take long.”

I did what she asked and returned to sit while she finished. My thoughts wouldn't stay away from the question about my cycle. I'd never paid much attention to it unless something felt wrong. Now

I found myself trying to remember exactly when I'd last had one.

Vaela remained focused on whatever she'd sensed. I could feel her curiosity more than concern, which helped. If she believed we were in danger, I knew she would tell rne. Instead, she seemed to be trying to understand something unfamiliar.

'What do you feel?' I asked.

'Life.'

I stopped breathing for a second. That one word gave meaning to every question Sera had asked me. My hand returned to my stomach, and this time I knew why. I stared down at it as my thoughts raced ahead.

"Isla?" Sera called my name when she noticed my face. She came back to me and sat down. "Are you alright?"

I looked at her. "Vaela said she feels life." Saying it aloud made it feel more possible. "Does that mean what I think it means?"

Sera looked surprised that Vaela had sensed anything already. "It could." She reached for my hand again. "That's why I wanted to be certain before saying anything."

I couldn't stop looking at my stomach. I'd never really allowed myself to think this far ahead. There had always been another problem waiting for us, another truth we needed to uncover. Now I was sitting here wondering if I was carrying Caius's child.

Sera finished checking the test she'd prepared. I watched her face, trying to read the answer before she gave it to me. She checked it once more before returning to my side. Then she smiled.

"You're pregnant. Sera squeezed my hand. "It's very early, but I'm certain."

A.OR.C

Out Pup

For a moment, I couldn't speak. I heard the words and understood them, but they still seemed impossible. I was carrying Caius's child. Vaela was already trying to understand the new life

Connected to us.

‘Our pup?’ she asked.

‘Our pup.’

Happiness filled me so completely that I forgot what I wanted to say. Vaela didn’t need another explanation after that. She understood exactly what was happening now. I pressed both hands against my stomach.

Sera gave me a moment before speaking again. “Everything looks normal for this stage.” She knew that would be one of my first concerns. “The tiredness and changes in smell can happen this early.”

I nodded, but I was barely thinking about yesterday anymore. My thoughts had gone to Caius waiting outside the door. He’d spent the journey worrying because I’d been tired and couldn’t stand one meal. He had no idea what he was about to hear.

“I want to tell him.” I looked toward the door. I wanted to see his face when he learned. “Can he come in?”

Sera smiled. “Of course.” She stood and went toward the door. “I’ll bring Alpha King Caius in.”

Caius entered immediately. His eyes went from Sera to me, and I could feel his concern through our bond. He came directly to my side. I couldn’t stop myself from smiling at him.

“What happened?” Caius asked. His attention went to my hands resting over my stomach. “Are you alright?”

“I’m alright.” I reached for his hand and pulled him closer. Suddenly, I had no idea how to say something I’d never expected to tell him today. “Sera found out why I’ve been tired.”

Caius looked at Sera. “What is it?” His concern grew before she could answer. “Is something wrong?”

Sera shook her head. “Nothing is wrong.” She looked at me, leaving the rest for me to say. “Isla is healthy.”

Caius turned back to me. I could feel him waiting for the answer. I took his hand and placed it over my stomach beside mine. His expression changed when he realized where I’d put it.

“I’m pregnant.” I watched him carefully. I wanted to remember everything about this moment. “We’re having a baby.”

Calus didn’t move.

ORD

* Out Pup

For several seconds, he simply stared at me. Surprise came through our bond so strongly that t nearly laughed. Vorak understood before Caius found anything to say. His attention went straight

Vaela.

‘Our pup.’

Vaela answered him immediately.

‘Yes.’

Caius finally looked down at our hands. His fingers spread over my stomach as though he expected to feel something already. There was nothing he could feel yet. That didn’t seem to matter to him.

“A baby?” he asked. His eyes returned to mine. “You’re certain?”

I smiled. “Sera is certain.” I covered his hand with mine. “And Vaela can feel something too.”

Caius looked toward Sera. “She’s safe?” His concern hadn’t completely disappeared. “Both of them?”

Sera nodded. “Everything I can check right now looks good.” She returned the things she’d used to the cabinet. “I’ll keep checking Isla as the pregnancy develops.”

Relief passed through our bond before Caius looked at me again. Then he smiled in a way I rarely saw from him. He leaned down and kissed my forehead before pulling me against him. I wrapped my arms around him.

“We’re having a baby,” he said. He sounded as though he needed to hear the words again. His hand he returned to my stomach Cased me. “Our baby.”

I laughed. “That’s usually what pregnant means.” Seeing him like this made everything feel real.

“You look shocked.”

“I am.” Caius looked down at my stomach again. He didn’t even try to deny it. “I wasn’t expecting to come home and find out I’m going to be a father.”

Neither had I. This morning, I'd been thinking about Darius's letters and everything I wanted to learn about the father I'd lost. Now I was carrying a child of my own. The thought made me reach for Caius again.

Vaela was still trying to understand what she could sense within me. Vorak remained close through the bond too. Neither of them seemed interested in anything outside the healing room funderstood exactly how they felt.

Keeper records waiting for us. Pryor had a family to trace. Orin had more to tell us,

Our Pup and Lyrienne still needed to see Darius's letters. None of it disappeared because of what we'd learned today. It could wait a little while.

Tooked at Caius with his hand still resting over our child.

We were going to be parents.

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Chapter 306

Everything Is Different

Everything Is Different

(Caius)

Sera eventually reminded us that she still had other wolves to see. Isla laughed and stood, but I kept my hand around hers as we left the healing room. Knowing she was carrying our child had changed everything in the space of a few minutes. I was still trying to understand that was going to be a father.

"You're staring at me," Isla said. She looked amused rather than bothered by it. "I've caught you doing it three times."

"I know." I wasn't going to pretend otherwise. "I'm trying to understand how you can look exactly the same when everything is different."

Isla smiled and rested her free hand against her stomach. We hadn't expected this, and we hadn't planned for it, but I couldn't imagine receiving better news. Vorak had been focused on Vaela and the pup since Sera confirmed the pregnancy. I doubted that would change anytime soon.

'She needs to rest.'

I nearly laughed at him. ‘She slept all night.’

‘She is carrying our pup.’

I understood immediately what the next several months would be like. Vorak was going to question everything Isla did, and I wasn’t sure I would be much better. She already hated when I worried too much. Being pregnant wasn’t going to make her more patient with either of us.

We reached our quarters, and Isla went directly to the chest we’d brought from Ravenspire. Darius’s letters were still packed inside with the other things he’d left for her. She touched the lid but didn’t open it. I knew why without asking.

“I want my mother here when I read them.” Isla turned toward me. Her happiness remained, but I could see Darius was on her mind again. “I don’t want to read them without her.”

“Then we wait.” The letters had survived centuries. “A little longer won’t hurt them.”

Isla nodded and came back to me. I wondered what Lyrienne would say when she learned about the baby. She’d lost the chance to watch Isla grow because of Varen and everyone who’d followed his plans. Now she would have the chance to know her grandchild.

A knock came at the door before either of us could say more. I opened it and found Pryor outside with Maelor’s book in his hands. He’d already started working again. I should have expected nothing less.

HE

Everything Is Different

“I found the daughter Orin mentioned.” Pryor opened the book to one of the pages he’d marked need to compare this with the records we brought back.”

“Tomorrow.” I didn’t even look at the page. There was nothing in those records that couldn’t wait until morning. “We’re done for today.”

Pryor looked surprised. He glanced past me toward Isla before returning his attention to me. I rarely stopped an investigation when we had something worth following. He clearly wanted to know what had changed.

Isla came to stand beside me. “We found out something else after we got home.” She looked at me before continuing. “Something good.”

Pryor waited.

“I’m pregnant.” Isla smiled as she said it. Her hand found mine again. “Sera confirmed it.”

Pryor stared at her for a moment before his expression changed. “Congratulations.” He closed Maelor’s book. “The records can definitely wait until tomorrow.”

“Thank you.” Isla looked happier every time she said the news aloud. “We haven’t told anyone else yet.”

Pryor nodded. “I won’t say anything.” He stepped away from the doorway with the book under his arm. “You should tell everyone when you’re ready.”

After he left, Isla closed the door. I could feel her amusement through the bond. She had noticed how quickly Pryor abandoned the investigation after hearing the news. I had too.

“We should tell Lyrienne ourselves,” Isla said. Her mother was the first person she’d mentioned. “I don’t want her hearing it from anyone else.”

“We will.” I wanted to see Lyrienne’s reaction too. “And we’ll make sure the news stays here until you’ve told her.”

Isla walked toward the window and looked outside. Wolves were still moving around the pack house after our return. Orin was somewhere below with Zeron and Raith. None of them knew what had happened in Sera’s healing room.

“I want to tell Sera everything tonight too.” Isla touched Darius’s pendant. “About Orin, Darius, the Keepers, all of it.”

“You can.” I went to her. “But you’re eating before you spend hours talking.”

She turned and gave me a look. I knew exactly what it meant. The pregnancy had been confirmed less than an hour ago, and I was already telling her to eat.

Everything Is Different

“I’m hungry anyway.” She placed a hand against my chest. “So you can stop looking proud of yourself.”

I smiled. “I didn’t say anything.”

“You didn’t have to.” Isla walked past me toward the door. “I know you.”

We ate together away from everyone else. Isla’s appetite had returned, and none of the food bothered her this time. I watched without commenting because I knew she’d catch me doing that too. She did anyway.

After we finished, we returned to our quarters instead of joining the others. Isla sat beside the chest and removed Darius's pendant from around her neck. She held it in her palm while looking the carved wolf Lyrienne had given her before. Father and daughter were connected through two things Darius had once touched.

"I wish he knew." Isla looked down at the pendant. Her happiness didn't disappear, but I understoo what she meant. "I wish Darius knew he was going to have a grandchild."

I sat beside her. "Maybe Lyrienne can tell you what he would've said." She knew Darius better than anyone still alive. "You already know he loved you."

Isla nodded and placed the pendant beside the wooden wolf. She rested her hand against her stomach afterward. The child was too small for either of us to feel, yet that didn't stop me from looking there. Our lives had changed before we'd even realized it.

Vorak remained focused on Vaela.

'Protect them.'

I looked at Isla.

'Always.'

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Chapter 307

The Next Generation

The Next Generation

(Caius)

Isla stayed beside me for another few minutes before reaching for Darius's pendant again. I cou tell she wanted to remain with the things her father had left, but she'd also promised Sera an explanation. She returned the pendant to her neck and closed the chest. We left our quarters together and went to find Sera.

We found her after she'd finished seeing the last wolf who needed her. Isla told her everything th had happened since we'd left Wraithbone, beginning with Halvon and ending with Orin. She explained what we'd learned about Darius, the three Keepers, and the protected sleep. I stayed beside her while Sera listened without interrupting.

"That's a lot to discover in one journey," Sera said. She looked at Isla for a moment before continuing. "And now you're pregnant on top of everything else."

Isla laughed. “I think that’s the only thing we discovered that didn’t give me another problem to solve.” She rested her hand over her stomach. “I still can’t believe it.”

Sera smiled. “You have plenty of time for that to become real.” She began putting away the last of her supplies. “Right now, I want you eating properly and resting when you’re tired.”

Isla looked at me immediately. I knew she was waiting for me to say something. I kept my mouth closed because Sera had already said everything I would’ve said. That didn’t stop Isla from knowing I agreed.

The next morning, Pryor was waiting for us with the records he’d compared overnight. Orin sat with him while Zeron and Raith stood nearby. Several books were open across the table. The family Orin had mentioned was written on one of Pryor’s pages.

“I traced the daughter,” Pryor said. family name.”

e turned the page toward us. “She married and took her mate’s

I looked at the names he’d written beneath hers. There were several generations, each connected through daughters rather than sons. That explained why anyone searching the original family name would’ve believed the bloodline ended. Whoever wanted the connection hidden had done it well.

“How far did you get?” Isla asked. She sat beside me and looked over the page. “Can you bring it to someone living now?”

Pryor nodded. “I believe so.” He pointed to the final name on the page. “But I want to confirm it before we approach anyone.”

The Next Generation

Orin leaned forward. “That’s the right choice.” His attention stayed on the name Pryor had found this family still follows Varen’s beliefs, they cannot know what we have.”

Ista looked at Orin. “You said someone from this family searched for the records seventeen years ago.” She glanced back at Pryor’s page. “Was it this person?”

“No.” Orin tapped an older name farther up the line. “Her mother.”

That gave us something useful. If the mother had been searching for Keeper records seventeen years ago, the daughter might know why. She might also know nothing at all. We needed to lear which was true before bringing her anywhere near Isla.

Zeron, work with Pryor,” I said. He’d handled enough of the investigation to know what we neede Find out everything you can before anyone contacts her.”

Zeron nodded. “We’ll start with where she’s living now.” He took the copied page from Pryor. “If she’s moved, we’ll find that too.”

Isla remained at the table after the others began gathering the records. I knew she was listening, but part of her attention was elsewhere. Her hand had returned to her stomach twice since we’d sat down. Each time she seemed surprised to catch herself doing it.

Orin noticed too. “Something happened yesterday.” He looked between us. “Pryor has been unusually quiet about it.”

Isla turned toward Pryor. “You really didn’t tell him?” She sounded impressed. “I thought he’d figure it out.”

Pryor closed one of the books. “You asked me not to tell anyone.” He gathered his notes. “So I didn’t.”

Orin waited for Isla to explain. He had spent centuries protecting her without knowing whether he’d ever see her again. I wondered what this news would mean to him after everything he’d done. Isla seemed to wonder the same thing.

“I’m pregnant,” she said. A smile appeared as soon as the words left her mouth. “We found out yesterday.”

Orin stared at her. For several seconds, he said nothing, and I wondered whether the news had taken him back to another time. He’d known Darius before Isla was born. Now Darius’s daughter front of him carrying the next generation.

I’ve been very happy,” Orin said. His eyes went to the pendant around Isla’s neck.

mily more than he ever admitted.”

I wish he was here.” She touched the pendant. “But I have my mother.”

Next Generat

That reminded me of the promise we’d made yesterday. Lyrienne needed to hear about the pregnancy from Isla, and the letters were still waiting in our quarters. We also had no reason to keep her separated from what we’d discovered about Darius. It was time to bring her into everything we’d found.

“We should send word to Frostvale today,” I said. Lyrienne had told Isla she would come when h work beneath the mountain was finished. “She can decide whether she’s able to leave yet.”

Isla nodded. “I want her here.” Her hand rested against her stomach again. “Not only because of the baby.

I knew what she meant. Darius's letters belonged to Isla, but reading them with Lyrienne would give both of them something they'd been denied. Lyrienne had spent centuries believing her daughter was gone while holding on to memories of Darius. Now Isla could return part of him to her.

"I'll have a message sent," I said. We had wolves who could carry it directly to Frostvale. "She'll know where to find us."

Isla reached for my hand beneath the table. The investigation wasn't finished, and Pryor had just given us another family to follow. This time, though, there was something good waiting alongside all those answers. We weren't only uncovering what had been taken from Isla anymore.

We were beginning something of our own.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 308

When You Have Something to Protect

(Isla)

The message for Lyrienne Teft Wraithbone before noon. Caius sent two wolves who knew the route to Frostvale and told them to place the message directly into her hands. I hadn't written anything about the pregnancy. That was something I wanted to tell my mother myself.

I spent the afternoon with Sera while Caius met with Zeron and Pryor. There were still things I wanted to understand about being pregnant, especially because I knew nothing about Celestial pregnancies. Sera admitted there were questions she couldn't answer either. My blood made some things harder to predict.

"Do you think the baby will be Celestial?" I asked. Vaela had wondered about it too. "Or is it too early to know?"

"It's too early." Sera sat across from me. "We don't know how much of your Celestial blood the baby will inherit." She didn't try to guess.

That answer didn't frighten me. I had spent too much of my life being afraid of things I didn't understand. Whatever our child inherited, Caius and I would deal with it together. I only wanted the baby to be healthy.

Later that evening, Caius found me outside with Sera. He'd spent hours going through the Keeper records with Pryor and Zeron. I could tell from his face that they'd found something. Sera noticed too and excused herself.

"Pryor confirmed the name," Caius said. He sat beside me. "The daughter Orin mentioned is alive." He didn't look pleased about what they'd learned.

"Where is she?" I asked. I wasn't interested in chasing another unknown wolf across several territories. "Is she far from Wraithbone?"

"Not as far as we expected." Caius rested his arms on his legs. "She's living in a territory under the western alliance."

Halvon's alliance.

I didn't need to say it aloud. Caius knew exactly where my thoughts had gone because his bad probably gone there too. Halvon had spent years representing those territories on the Council. If this woman had lived there for any length of time, there was a chance he knew her.

"Does Halvon know?" I asked. Orin had teid us his son didn't know everything about the Keepers. "Could he know who she is?"

"We don't know." Caius looked toward the pack house. "Zeron is checking before we ask Halvon anything."

That made sense. Halvon had helped us find Orin, but I still didn't know what to make of him. His father had hidden things from him for centuries. I wasn't ready to decide whether that made Halvon innocent of everything connected to Varen.

for most of the afternoon. I thought she might still be focused on the baby, but when wation returned to our conversation. She didn't offer an opinion. Neither did I.

hungry enough to make Caius laugh. I ate twice what I'd eaten the day

When You Have Something to Protect

Et before and still wanted fruit afterward. Apparently my stomach had decided it no longer hated food. Sera seemed pleased when she heard.

By midday, the wolves we'd sent to Frostvale hadn't returned. I knew the journey would take time, but knowing that didn't make waiting easier. Twanted Lyrienne here. Every time I saw Darius's chest, I thought about those unopened letters.

Pryor found me while I was returning to our quarters. He carried a few pages but none of the old books. I stopped when he approached because I knew he wouldn't interrupt me without a reason. His expression told me the investigation had moved again.

"We found her current name," Pryor said. He handed me the first page. "And Zeron confirmed where she's living."

I looked down at the name. It meant nothing to me, which wasn't surprising. There were hundreds of families I'd never heard of. What mattered was the territory written beneath it.

"Does Orin recognize this?" I asked. The woman was connected to the family that had searched for his records. "Has he seen the name before?"

"Not this one." Pryor pointed to the mother's name. "But he recognizes her."

I read it again. Seventeen years ago, that woman had been searching for the records Darius and Maelor protected. Now her daughter was living beneath the western alliance. Too many pieces were beginning to sit close together.

"Is the mother alive?" I asked. Finding her would give us a direct answer instead of guessing what she'd wanted. "Can we question her?"

Pryor shook his head. "She died twelve years ago." He took the page when I offered it back. "Her daughter is the only confirmed child."

That left us with one person. We couldn't accuse her of something her mother had done before we knew whether she was involved. I knew better than most what happened when people decided blood determined guilt. Caius wouldn't allow that either.

"Then we learn about her before we do anything." I started walking again with Pryor beside me. "I don't want anyone frightening her because of her mother."

Pryor nodded. "Zeron is already working on it." He returned the pages to the folder he carried. "We should know more by tomorrow."

When I reached our quarters, I found Orin waiting outside. He held a small folded paper in one hand. I thought it was another record until he gave it to me. My name was written across the front.

"Darius wrote that one separately," Orin said. He didn't try to enter our quarters. "Maelor kept it outside the chest because Darius gave instructions about when you should receive it."

I looked at the folded paper. "When?" My fingers touched my name. "What was he waiting for?

“When you had something of your own to protect.” Orin’s eyes went briefly toward my stomach ‘I think that time has come.”

I forgot about the woman Pryor had found

When You Har something to Protect

The paper felt different from the other letters because Darius had chosen a moment for this one. He’d written something for a future he knew he might never see. Somehow, centuries later, Orin had remembered his instructions.

I carried the letter inside but didn’t open it. Lyrienne still wasn’t here, and I’d promised myself I would read Darius’s words with her. This letter would wait with the others. I placed it on top of the chest.

My hand settled over my stomach.

“I’ll wait for her, Dad.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 309

An Unanswered Question

(Caius)

I found Isla in our quarters when I returned in the afternoon. Darius’s chest was closed, but a folded letter rested on top of it. I knew immediately it was the one Orin had given her. Isla hrad kept her promise to wait for Lyrienne.

“Orin told me about the letter,” I said. I crossed to her and took her hand. “He said Darius left instructions for it.” I looked at the paper again.

“He wanted me to have it when I had something of my own to protect.” isla looked down at herself. “Orin thinks he meant this.” She gave me a small smile.

I couldn’t imagine Darius knowing exactly when his daughter would receive those words. He had prepared for a future he wouldn’t be there to see. Now Isla carried his pendant and waited beside letters he’d written centuries ago. Our child had become part of that future.

Vorak had been protective since Sera confirmed the pregnancy. He noticed everything Isla did, including whether she’d eaten and how much she’d rested. I wasn’t much better. Isla had already caught me watching her several times that morning.

“You need to stop doing that,” she said. She knew exactly where my thoughts had gone. “I’m pregnant, Caius. I’m not going to break.”

“I know.” I brought her hand to my lips. “I’m still going to watch you.” There was no point pretending otherwise.

She laughed and pulled her hand free. I let her go because there was something else I needed to handle. Pryor and Zeron were waiting for me in the library. I told Isla where I was going before leaving.

Pryor had several records open when I arrived. Zeron stood across from him with the information he’d gathered about the woman they were tracing. They had confirmed where she lived and how long she’d been there. Nothing they’d found showed any connection to Varen’s beliefs yet.

“She was born in the western territories,” Zeron said. He handed me a page containing the information he’d gathered. “Her mother moved there before she was born.” He’d found no reason for the move.

“Keep looking.” I returned the page to him. “I want to know who the mother knew and where she traveled before her death.” We needed facts before we approached her daughter,

Pryor reached for another record while Zeron gathered his notes. I noticed the Crown seal on the cover before Pryor opened it. It was one of the older territorial ledgers we’d used months ago. Seeing it brought back something I should’ve dealt with long before now.

Silvermere.

Before Isla and I ever crossed the northern mountains, Pryor had found Silvermere in an old territorial record. Access to the territory had been restricted during my grandfather’s reign. Pryor had also remembered seeing Silvermere mentioned in records belonging to my father. I’d intended to ask my father what he knew.

Voting is ongoing for times moon tickets

An Unanswered Question never had.

One discovery had led us into another. Silvermere took us to Evercrest, then Frostvale, Lyrienne, the Celestial archive and everything we’d learned about the Keepers. After that came Halvon and Orin. Somewhere during all of it, my father had become another question d left unanswered.

“Pryor.” I looked at the ledger in front of him. “When we found the Silvermere entry, you said you’d seen the name in one of my father’s records.” I remembered his answer clearly.

“Yes.” Pryor stopped searching. “I remember.” His attention went to the older records beside him.

“Did we ever find out why?” I asked. I already knew the answer. “Or what he knew about the restriction?” It had been left behind when we traveled north.

“No.” Pryor closed the book he’d been reading. “We had Cael’s map by then, and everything moved quickly after that.” He looked at me. “We never returned to it.”

That needed to change. My father had ruled before me and had access to records I hadn’t known existed. Even if he knew nothing about the Keepers, he might know what my grandfather had told him about Silvermere. There was only one way to find out.

“I’ll contact him.” I hadn’t spoken to my father in longer than I liked admitting. “I’ve put it off long enough.” This wasn’t only about the investigation anymore.

Pryor nodded and returned to his work. I left the library a few minutes later and went looking for Isla. I found her with Sera again. She took one look at me and knew something had changed.

“What happened?” Isla asked. She turned toward me. “Did they find something else?” Her concern appeared immediately.

“Nothing bad.” I sat beside her. “I remembered something we should’ve dealt with months ago.” I wondered whether she would remember too.

“Silvermere was mentioned in my father’s territorial records.” I had told her about those records before we went north. “We never asked him what he knew.” That unfinished conversation had waited long enough,

Isla watched me for a moment. Recognition came quickly. “You told me you wanted to visit him after the High Council left.” She hadn’t forgotten.

“I did.” Too much had happened since then. “I should’ve gone before now.” I hadn’t seen him in more than two years.

“You can still go.” Isla reached for my hand. “And now you have more than Silvermere to tell him about.” Her eyes dropped briefly toward her stomach.

I knew exactly what she meant. My father didn’t know Isla was pregnant. Neither did his mate or Nara. The thought of telling him I was going to be a father felt different from every message I’d considered sending him before.

“I want you with me.” I wasn’t going to meet my father after two years and leave Isla behind. “But we won’t leave until Lyrienne comes.” I knew what Isla was waiting for.

“Good.” Isla looked toward our quarters. “I want to read Dad’s letters with her before we go anywhere.” She’d already waited centuries without knowing they existed.

Lagreed. There was no reason to rush another journey when we had people who could continue the Tvestigation here. I’d send word to my father and let him know I wanted to visit. By the time we were ready, I hoped he’d have answers waiting for us.

Vorak was listening as thought about my father. Two years had passed since I’d last seen him, and I was returning with a mate he’d never met. I was also bringing news neither of us could’ve expected the last time we spoke. The next time I saw him, I’d tell him he was going to be a grandfather.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 311

She’s Coming

(Isla)

The wolves sent to Frostvare returned the following afternoon. I was with Sera when one of them came looking for me. He’d delivered our message directly to Lyrienne as Caius had ordered. My mother had sent an answer back with him.

“She’s coming,” he said. “She asked me to tell you she would leave Frostvale within the day.” He lowered his head respectfully. “She said there were a few things she needed to arrange before leaving.”

“Thank you.” I couldn’t stop myself from smiling. “Did she say how long she’ll stay?” I hoped it wouldn’t only be for a day.

“No.” The wolf glanced toward Caius, who had joined us. “She only said she would explain when she arrived.” He waited until Caius dismissed him before leaving.

I looked at Caius as soon as we were alone. Lyrienne didn’t know why I’d asked her to come, but she’d agreed without hesitation. I wanted to tell her about the baby before anyone else did. Then there were Darius’s letters waiting for both of us.

“She’ll probably be here tomorrow,” I said. The journey from Frostvale wasn’t short. “Maybe the following morning if she stops overnight.” I was already counting the hours.

“She’ll come.” Caius took my hand. “You don’t have to worry about that.” He knew me too well.

I nodded and looked toward the doorway the wolf had disappeared through. My mother had spent centuries looking for me. Now I was waiting for her to come to my home. That still meant more to me than I knew how to explain.

“Did you send your message?” I asked. Caius had told me this morning he intended to contact his father. “Or did you change your mind?” I didn’t think he had.

“I sent it.” Caius looked at me. “He should receive it within a few days.” He hadn’t told his father why he wanted to visit.

“Did you tell him about the baby?” I asked. I already suspected the answer. “Or are you waiting too?”

“I’m waiting.” Caius’s answer came at once. “I’d rather tell him when I see him.” understood that better than I had the day before.

We were both carrying news for our parents. Mine was coming to Wraithbone while his lived far enough away that we’d need to travel to him. I wondered what his father would think of me. Then I wondered what his sister would think too.

I’d heard enough about her to be curious. Caius had called her persistent and opinionated, which had sounded more like affection than complaint. She was my age, and she’d known Caius in a way I hadn’t. I wanted to see that part of his life for myself.

Sera insisted I eat before I went anywhere else. I didn’t argue because my hunger had returned again. The food that had bothered me during the journey no longer made me feel sick. Instead, I seemed to want something every few hours.

Vaela found the whole thing interesting. She paid more attention whenever I ate, as though she expected To understand the baby through my appetite. I told her that wasn’t going to work. She ignored me.

‘The pup needs food, Vaela said. Her attention remained on the fruit I’d taken. ‘Eat another one.’ She sounded completely certain.”

I laughed. ‘Sera already fed me enough.‘ I reached for another piece anyway. Vaela seemed pleased with herself.

Caius found me eating again and said nothing. That was worse than if he’d teased me. I knew he was thinking about how little I’d wanted to eat on the journey home. His expression told me he approved of the change.

“Don’t start,” I warned him. I pointed at the chair across from me. “You can sit there without commenting on how much I’ve eaten.” I knew he would enjoy this far too much.

“I didn’t say anything.” Caius sat down. “You’re arguing with something I haven’t done.” He looked entirely innocent.

“You were thinking it.” I knew him well enough to be certain. “Vaela is already telling me to eat more.” I didn’t need both of them doing it.

Caius laughed before reaching for some fruit himself. We stayed there until Pryor came to find him. Zeron had uncovered more information about the woman in the western territories. This time, Caius asked me to come with him.

Orin was already in the library when we arrived. Zeron had learned that the woman’s mother traveled outside the western territories several times before her death. One journey had taken her north seventeen years ago. Orin recognized the year immediately.

“That’s when she was searching for me,” Orin said. He looked at the travel record. “She never found this house.” His finger rested beside the date.

“Do you know why she wanted the records?” I asked. Orin had told us who searched for them but not what she’d hoped to find. “Was she trying to destroy them?” That mattered before we judged her daughter.

“I don’t know.” Orin looked at me. “I never spoke to her.” He wouldn’t pretend to know more than he did.

That left us with another question. Zeron had found no evidence that the daughter had ever searched for Keeper records herself. She lived an ordinary life from everything they’d learned so far. Approaching her as an enemy would be a mistake.

“We talk to her,” I said. Caius looked at me but didn’t interrupt. “Not yet, but once Zeron finishes checking everything.” I wanted the truth without frightening someone who might be innocent.

“Agreed.” Caius turned to Zeron. “Finish the search first.” He wanted the same thing I did.

Before Zeron could gather the records, another wolf appeared at the library entrance. He’d been stationed near Wraithbone’s northern boundary this morning. One of the patrols had seen someone approaching from the north. The wolf had asked them to send word ahead.

“Lady Lyrienne is coming,” he said. “She’ll reach Wraithbone before evening.” He stepped aside after delivering the message. “She asked that Luna Isla know.”

Everything else left my mind.

My mother was already closer than I’d expected. Darius’s chest was waiting, along with the letter Orin had saved for this moment in my life. Soon would tell Lyrienne that she

was going to be a grandmother. Then, together, we would finally read what my father had left for us.

My MotheLiefere

My Mother Is Here

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 312

My Mother Is Here

(Isla)

I left the library before anyone could say anything else. Caius followed, and I knew he understood why I couldn't sit there discussing records anymore. My mother would be at Wraithbone before evening. Everything I wanted to tell her kept running through my mind.

We returned to our quarters, where Darius's chest waited. I checked the letter Orin had given me even though I knew exactly where I'd left it. The other letters were still inside the chest. Soon Lyrienne would see all of them.

"You're nervous," Caius said. He stood near me while I closed the chest again. "She'll be happy about the baby." He sounded certain.

"I know." I turned toward him. "I just keep thinking about telling her." Lyrienne had already lost so much time with me.

She hadn't watched me grow up or been there when Vaela finally came to me. Now there was something new she wouldn't have to hear about centuries later. She could be here while I carried her grandchild. She could know this part of my life as it happened.

Caius came closer and kissed me. The moment his mouth touched mine, something changed in the way my body responded to him. I caught the front of his shirt and pulled him back when he started to move away. He looked at me with clear surprise.

"What?" I asked. I didn't release his shirt. "Why are you looking at me like that?" I already knew I'd kissed him differently.

"You usually let me breathe." Caius's mouth curved. "I was beginning to wonder if you planned to." His hands settled at my waist.

“I changed my mind.” I kissed him again. His scent seemed stronger today, and having him this close wasn’t helping. Vaela was enjoying it far too much.

‘Mate; she said. There was no confusion about what she wanted. ‘Keep him here. Her interest made my own worse.

I pulled away and stared at Caius. Sera had warned me pregnancy could bring changes, but this hadn’t been part of our conversation. Caius looked far too pleased with what had just happened. I refused to give him the satisfaction of asking what he was thinking.

“Don’t say anything.” I released his shirt. “Not one word.” I pointed toward the door.

“I wasn’t going to.” Caius made no attempt to hide his amusement. “But now I’m curious.” He stayed exactly where he was.

I left before Vaela convinced me to forget Lyrienne was arriving. Caius laughed behind me and followed a moment later. I decided Sera and I needed another conversation when I had the chance. There were clearly parts of pregnancy she’d forgotten to mention.

We waited near the pack house as evening approached. Several wolves had heard Lyrienne was coming.

My Motherie There

Clam though nobody knew why I’d called for her. Orin joined us after a while. He seemed interested in seeing her again.

A patrol wolf appeared first and told Caius Lyrienne was close. I watched the path until I finally saw her approaching with the wolves who’d gone to meet her. Seeing my mother walking into Wraithbone felt different from finding her in Frostvale. This time, she had come because I’d asked.

“Isla.” Lyrienne came directly to me. “You had me wondering the entire journey why your message couldn’t explain anything.” She wrapped her arms around me.

“I wanted to tell you myself.” I hugged her back. “There are actually several things I need to tell you.” I didn’t know which one to start with.

Lyrienne drew back and studied me. Her eyes moved to Caius and then Orin. She stopped when she recognized him. Whatever she’d expected to find at Wraithbone, Orin clearly hadn’t been part of it.

“Orir.” Lyrienne stared at him. “I haven’t seen you in centuries.” Her surprise gave way to questions almost immediately.

“It’s good to see you too, Lyrienne.” Orin remained where he was. “There is much we need to discuss.” He glanced toward me.

“There is.” I took my mother’s hand. “But I need to tell you something else first.” I couldn’t hold it any longer.

Lyrienne turned back to me. I had imagined several ways of telling her since Sera confirmed it. None of them seemed necessary now that she was standing in front of me. I wanted the words to be simple.

“I’m pregnant.” I smiled before I could stop myself. “Caius and I are having a baby.” Saying it to her made everything feel even more real.

Lyrienne didn’t answer immediately. Her eyes went from me to Caius and back again. Then her hands came up to cover her mouth. Tears filled her eyes.

“You’re going to be a grandmother,” I said. I laughed when her tears finally fell. “I only found out a few days ago.” I reached for her again.

Lyrienne pulled me into her arms. She held me longer this time, and I could feel her trying to control her emotions. I didn’t ask her to. There was no reason she needed to hide them from me.

“My daughter is having a child.” Lyrienne drew back enough to look at me, “t never thought I’d have this.” She wiped her face.

“You’ll be here for this one.” I held her hands. “You won’t have to hear about it after it’s already happened.” That mattered to both of us.

“I’ll be here.” Lyrienne nodded. “As much as you’ll let me.” Her smile returned.

Caius stepped closer then, and Lyrienne hugged him too. His surprise made me laugh. She congratulated him before finally releasing him. Even Orin looked amused by it.

There was still one more reason I’d called her here. I took Lyrienne back to our quarters with Caius and Orin following us. When I opened the door, her attention went immediately to Darius’s chest. She stopped walking.

My Mother Pere

“Where did you get that?” Lyrienne asked. She recognized it before I explained. “That belonged to Darius.” Her eyes stayed on the carving.

“Orin kept it safe.” I crossed to the chest. “Dad left things for me.” placed my hand beside the folded letter.

I opened the chest and showed her the letters. Lyrienne stared at them without touching anything. I told her Darius had written them for me before and after I was born. Then I told her I'd waited because I wanted her beside me when I read them.

Lyrienne sat beside me. I picked up the first letter and placed Darius's final letter aside for later. Caius remained nearby while Orin gave us space. My mother reached for my hand.

Together, we opened the first letter.

Grab this second chance shifter

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 313

(Isla)

My fingers stayed on the paper as I unfolded it. The writing was old, but every word was still clear. Lyrienne leaned closer beside me without releasing my hand. I took a breath and began reading.

"My little Isla, your mother says you're going to be stubborn." I stopped and looked at Lyrienne. "He really started with that?" I couldn't help smiling.

"He knew you before you were born." Lyrienne laughed. "You used to kick whenever I tried to sleep." She looked at the letter again.

I continued reading. Darius had written the letter two months before I was born. He wrote about wondering what I would look like and whether I'd have Lyrienne's eyes. He hoped I'd inherit her patience because he admitted he had very little of his own.

That made Lyrienne laugh again. She told me Darius had never been good at waiting for anything. If he wanted something done, he wanted it done immediately. Apparently I'd inherited more from him than I realized.

The rest of the letter wasn't about Celestials or danger. Darius wrote about wanting to take me to the river near Silvermere. He wanted to teach me how to fish even though Lyrienne had warned him I'd need to learn to walk first. He'd already been planning years ahead.

"He talked about that river constantly," Lyrienne said. Her smile remained as she read over the words beside me. "He had your entire childhood planned." Her eyes filled again.

I reached for the next letter. This one had been written after I was born. My name appeared at the top, and beneath it Darius had written the date. Lyrienne recognized it immediately.

“You were three weeks old.” Lyrienne touched the corner of the paper. “He barely slept during those weeks.” Her voice carried affection.

I began reading. Darius wrote that I had finally stopped crying long enough for him to finish the letter. He complained that nobody had warned him babies could be so loud. Then he admitted he’d spent half the night checking whether I was breathing whenever I became quiet.

I looked at Caius. He was standing a short distance away, listening. The look on his face told me he had already imagined himself doing exactly the same thing. I smiled at him before returning to the page.

“He sounds like someone else I know.” I glanced at Caius again. “Our baby isn’t even born and you’re already watching everything I do.” I knew he couldn’t deny it.

“I have no intention of stopping.” Caius came closer. “Darius had the right idea.” He didn’t seem embarrassed by the comparison.

Lyrienne laughed before I continued. Darius wrote about holding me while I slept and wondering what kind of wornan I’d become. He wanted me to know that I had been wanted from the moment he learned Lyrienne was carrying me. Whatever happened in my life, he never wanted me to question that

I couldn’t continue immediately. I’d spent years in Ashcrest believing my existence caused problems for

My fathersweis

Claim everyone around me. Derek and Helene had made sure I understood how little they wanted me. Darius had wanted me before he’d ever seen my face.

Lyrienne squeezed my hand. She didn’t need to explain anything because I already knew what she would say. She had wanted me too. The people who’d raised me had never been proof of what my real parents felt.

I finished the letter and returned it to its place. There were more than twenty waiting. We couldn’t read all of them at once, and I didn’t want to rush through Darius’s words simply because I finally had them. They’d waited this long.

“One more,” I said. I reached into the chest. “Then I think I need a break.” My emotions had already been pulled in too many directions.

“One more.” Lyrienne nodded. “We have time now.” She looked at me as she said it.

The next letter was shorter. Darius had written it when I was several months old. He described making another wooden wolf for me because I’d managed to chew one of the ears on the first one. I immediately thought about the wolf Lyrienne had given me.

“Was that the same one?” I asked. The wooden wolf had one uneven ear. “The one you gave me in

Frostvale?” I wanted to know.

“No.” Lyrienne smiled. “That one survived because I took it away before you could ruin it too.” She seemed pleased to finally tell me why.

I laughed and kept reading. Darius wrote that he hoped one day I’d understand why he kept making things for me. He wanted me to have objects made by his own hands rather than things bought because they were easier. He wanted pieces of himself to remain with me.

My laughter disappeared, but the feeling that replaced it wasn’t only sadness. I had his pendant around my neck, his wooden wolf, his letters and the family book Lyrienne had shown me. Darius had gotten what he’d wanted in a way he could never have predicted. Pieces of him had reached me.

When I finished, Lyrienne carefully returned the letter to the chest. Caius suggested we eat before reading anything else, and this time I didn’t argue. My hunger had already returned. Vaela agreed with him immediately.

‘Food; Vaela said. She had remained quiet while I read. ‘Then mate. Her second suggestion caught me completely unprepared.

I stared ahead for a second. Pregnancy was making Vaela far too interested in Caius and Vorak. Earlier I’d blamed Calus’s scent for what happened between us. Now I was beginning to understand that this wasn’t going away.

Lyrienne noticed my expression. “What did Vaela say?” She looked amused before I even answered. “I know that face.” Apparently mothers noticed too much.

“Nothing I’m repeating.” I stood and closed the chest. “She thinks I should eat.” I decided that was enough information.

Lyrienne’s amusement grew. “Only eat?” She rose beside me. “Seraya was the same when I carried you” Her answer made me stop.

My father’s w

Elaine

Hooked at her. Suddenly Sera wasn't the only person I could ask about Celestial pregnancy. Lyrienne had carried a Celestial child herself. She might know things nobody at Wraithbone could tell me.

"We need to talk later took her hand as we left the chest behind. "About everything pregnancy did to you." I wanted answers before Vaela surprised me again.

"We will." Lyrienne walked beside me. "And I promise, some of it is completely normal." Her laughter followed us as we went to find something to eat.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 314

My father's words

My father's words

(Isla)

My fingers stayed on the paper as I unfolded it. The writing was old, but every word was still clear. Lyrienne leaned closer beside me without releasing my hand. I took a breath and began reading.

"My little Isla, your mother says you're going to be stubborn." I stopped and looked at Lyrienne. "He really started with that?" I couldn't help smiling.

"He knew you before you were born." Lyrienne laughed. "You used to kick whenever I tried to sleep." She look at the letter again.

ed reading. Darius had written the letter two months before I was born. He wrote about g what I would look like and whether I'd have Lyrienne's eyes. He hoped I'd inherit her patience he admitted he had very little of his own.

de Lyrienne laugh again. She told me Darius had never been good at waiting for anything. If he something done, he wanted it done immediately. Apparently I'd inherited more from him than I rest of the letter wasn't about Celestials or danger. Darius wrote about wanting to take me to the river r Silvermere. He wanted to teach me how to fish even though Lyrienne had warned him I'd need to arn to walk first. He'd already been planning years ahead.

He talked about that river constantly," Lyrienne said. Her smile remained as she read over the words beside me. "He had your entire childhood planned." Her/eyes filled again.

I reached for the next letter. This one had been written after I was born. My name appeared at the top, and beneath it Darius had written the date. Lyrienne recognized it immediately.

“You were three weeks old.” Lyrienne touched the corner of the paper. “He barely slept during those weeks.” Her voice carried affection.

I began reading. Darius wrote that I had finally stopped crying long enough for him to finish the letter. He complained that nobody had warned him babies could be so loud. Then he admitted he’d spent half the night checking whether I was breathing whenever I became quiet

I looked at Caius. He was standing a short distance away, listening. The look on his face told me he had already imagined himself doing exactly the same thing. I smiled at him before returning to the page.

“He sounds like someone else I know.” I glanced at Caius again. “Our baby isn’t even born and you’re already watching everything I do.” I knew he couldn’t deny it.

“I have no intention of stopping.” Caius came closer. “Darius had the right idea.” He didn’t seem embarrassed by the comparison.

Lyrienne laughed before I continued. Darius wrote about holding me while I slept and wondering what kind of woman I’d become. He wanted me to know that I had been wanted from the moment he learned

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The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 315

Closer to My Mate

(Isla)

By the time we reached the dining area, I was hungry enough to understand why Vaela had been complaining. Caius made sure there was enough food in front of me before taking his own seat. Lyrienne noticed, but thankfully she kept whatever she was thinking to herself. Orin had stayed behind to speak with Pryor about the Keeper records.

I ate more than I expected and still wanted something else afterward. Vaela approved of every bite, which meant I heard far less complaining from her. Caius watched me reach for more fruit but remembered my earlier warning. I caught him smiling anyway.

“You’re doing it again,” I said. I pointed at him with the piece of fruit in my hand. “You promised not to comment.” I hadn’t forgotten.

“I haven’t commented.” Caius leaned back in his chair. “You’re the one who keeps bringing it up.” His smile only grew.

Lyrienne laughed from across the table. She’d been watching us for the last few minutes, and I knew I wouldn’t escape her questions forever. I finished eating before she could start. Then I asked if she wanted to walk with me.

Caius understood that I wanted time alone with my mother. He kissed me before leaving to find Pryor and Zeron. The kiss lasted longer than I’d intended because the second he touched me, my body reacted again. I had to remind myself that Lyrienne was standing a few feet away.

She waited until Caius was gone before looking at me. I recognized the amusement on her face immediately. Seraya had apparently given her enough experience to understand what was happening. That saved me from trying to explain it.

“So this is normal?” I asked. We started walking away from the pack house. “Because Vaela has become very interested in Caius.” I left out how interested I was too.

“Very normal.” Lyrienne smiled at me. “Pregnancy affected Seraya the same way.” She didn’t seem embarrassed discussing it.

I looked at her, waiting for more. Nobody had mentioned this when Sera explained what I might experience. I’d expected tiredness, hunger and changes in what I could tolerate eating. I hadn’t expected wanting my mate every time he came close.

“Why?” I asked. I wanted an answer before Vaela decided to embarrass me again. “Is it because of the baby?” There had to be some reason.

“Partly.” Lyrienne considered the question before answering. “Your body is changing, and your bond with your mate can respond to that.” She remembered experiencing a stronger need to remain close to Darius.

That made sense after the last two days. Calus’s scent seemed stronger, and even a simple kiss affected me more than it had before. Vaela also reacted whenever Vorak was near. Apparently none of us were imagining it.

“Does it last the entire pregnancy?” I asked. I wasn’t sure whether I wanted her to say yes or no. “Because

Caius is already enjoying this too much.” I could imagine how unbearable he’d become.

“It can.” Lyrienne laughed at my expression. “Some days will be different from others.” She assured me there was nothing wrong with what I was feeling.

I was relieved to hear it from someone who’d experienced it herself. Sera knew more about pregnancy than I did, but Lyrienne had carried a Celestial child. There were things she could tell me that weren’t written in any healer’s records. I wanted to learn as much as I could while she was here.

“Was your pregnancy with me difficult?” I asked. We’d spoken about my birth before, but not much about the months leading to it. “Did being Celestial change anything?” I hoped she remembered enough to help.

“No, it wasn’t difficult.” Lyrienne looked toward me. “I was tired more often at the beginning, and my senses became stronger.” She’d also needed more food as the pregnancy progressed.

Her experience sounded close to mine so far. That helped more than I expected. I had spent so much time learning what being Celestial meant after discovering the truth about myself. Now I had another part of that life to understand.

“Did Seraya know before you did?” I asked. Vaela had sensed the baby before Sera confirmed anything. “She told me there was life.” I still remembered hearing that single word.

“Yes.” Lyrienne nodded. “Seraya knew before I had any reason to suspect it.” Her wolf had become protective of me almost immediately.

Vaela seemed pleased by that answer. She’d been convinced from the beginning and hadn’t cared that I needed Sera to confirm it. Now she had proof that Seraya had done the same thing. I knew I’d hear about that later.

‘See?‘ Vaela said. Her satisfaction came through clearly. ‘I knew. There was no point arguing.

I smiled to myself before looking at Lyrienne again There was something else I wanted to know, but it had nothing to do with pregnancy. We had spent our first hours together talking about Darius through his letters. I wondered how she was handling seeing his writing again.

“Are you all right reading them with me?” I asked. I didn’t want her doing it only because I’d asked. “We can stop whenever you want.” The letters belonged to my past, but they were part of hers too.

“I want to read them.” Lyrienne reached for my hand. “Some of those letters were written while Darius was sitting beside me.” She wanted to know what he’d chosen to leave for me.

We continued walking until we reached a quieter part of the grounds. Lyrienne told me she’d brought enough things from Frostvale to remain at Wraithbone for several days. She’d arranged for everything there to be watched while she was gone. I was glad I wouldn’t have to say goodbye tomorrow.

When we returned, Caius was waiting outside the pack house. One look at him was enough to make Vaelą interested again. I tried to ignore her and failed when Caius came toward me. Lyrienne noticed and laughed.

“I’ll leave temor

CA aid. She kissed my cheek before heading inside. “We’ll read more

I could already tell he wanted to know what we’d discussed. I

Closer to My Mate-

took his hand and started toward our quarters instead. He followed without asking.

“Sera forgot to tell me something about pregnancy,” I said. I looked at him as we walked. “Apparently wanting my mate more is normal.” His expression changed immediately.

“I see.” Caius moved closer. “That’s useful information.” He looked far too pleased with himself.

“Don’t get used to it.” I tried to sound convincing. Vaela immediately disagreed with me. I knew Caius could tell.

He laughed and kissed me again. This time, I didn’t pull away.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 316

1 Never Chose to Leave You

(Isla)

The kiss lasted until I remembered we were still outside. I pulled back and looked around, hoping nobody had been close enough to notice. Caius didn’t seem concerned at all. That only made me more aware of how easily I’d forgotten where we were.

“Inside,” I said. I took his hand before he could kiss me again. “Before you make me embarrass myself in front of the entire pack.” I started walking.

“I haven’t made you do anything.” Caius followed beside me. “This has been entirely your idea so far.” He sounded far too pleased about that.

I gave him a look and kept walking. Vaela was no help because she agreed with him. She wanted Caius close, and apparently she didn’t care who saw it. I was beginning to think pregnancy had taken away whatever sense she had.

Once we reached our quarters, I expected the feeling to settle. It didn’t. Caius’s scent filled the space around me, and Vaela immediately became more interested. I understood why Lyrienne had laughed earlier.

Caius came up behind me and wrapped his arms around my waist. I leaned back against him before I could think about it. His lips touched my neck, and I closed my eyes. Every touch seemed to affect me more than usual.

‘Mate, Vaela said again. She was becoming predictable/‘Ours.‘ Her approval filled our bond.

“Vaela likes this far too much,” I said. I turned in Caius’s arms. “She hasn’t stopped talking about you since yesterday.” I wasn’t going to admit she wasn’t alone/

“Vorak isn’t complaining.” Caius brushed his thumb over my cheek. “He’s been watching her all day.” He smiled when my eyes narrowed.

I kissed him before he could say anything else. This time there was nobody around to interrupt us. Caius held me closer, and I forgot about the letters, the Keeper records and everything else waiting for us. For a little while, I only wanted my mate.

Later, I rested against Caius while he ran his fingers through my hair. Vaela had finally stopped demanding his attention. I wondered whether Seraya had driven Darius this crazy when Lyrienne was pregnant with me. Knowing my father, he’d probably enjoyed every second of it.

“Are you tired?” Caius asked. His hand stopped in my hair. “You did a lot today.” He was already back to worrying.

“A little.” I looked up at him. “But I’m fine.” I knew what his next question would be.

He accepted my answer without calling Sera. That was progress. I settled against him again and thought about the letters we’d read earlier. Darius had felt closer while I read his words.

“I keep thinking about Dad.” I traced one of the lines on Caius’s hand. “He wrote those letters believing he’d be there when I grew up.” I wished he’d gotten the chance.

Caius looked down at me. “He wanted you to know him even if he wasn’t.” His fingers returned to my hair. “That’s why he kept writing.” He understood what the letters meant to me.

I knew he was right. Darius couldn’t have known what would happen when he wrote the earliest ones. Later, when everything began going wrong, the letters must have meant something different to him. Maybe that was why there were so many.

The next morning, I woke hungry again. Vaela immediately reminded me that breakfast existed. Caius was already awake beside me, though he hadn’t moved. He seemed determined not to wake me.

“I’m awake,” I said. I opened my eyes and found him watching me. “And before you ask, I’m hungry.” That earned the reaction I expected.

“Good.” Caius sat up. “That saves me from asking.” He reached for his clothes.

After breakfast, Lyrienne joined me in our quarters again. Caius had gone to meet with Pryor and Zeron, giving us time alone. Darius’s chest remained where we’d left it. I opened it and began looking through the letters.

Lyrienne sat beside me and helped arrange them by date. Most were addressed directly to me. A few had nothing written on the outside except the date. One caught Lyrienne's attention before I could pick it up.

"I remember this date," she said. She took the letter but didn't open it. "This was when Darius started becoming afraid." Her expression changed.

I looked at the date again. The letter had been written not long before everything surrounding my disappearance began. Darius had already been investigating Varen and the Keeper families by then. Whatever was inside might be different from the letters we'd read yesterday.

"Do you want to open it?" I asked. I didn't reach for it,/"You can." I wanted her to decide.

"No." Lyrienne placed it in my hand. "He wrote these for you." She sat closer.

I unfolded the paper carefully. The first lines were still written by the father I'd begun to know through the other letters. Darius told me I'd learned to pull myself up using anything within reach. He also complained that I'd discovered how to throw food.

Lyrienne laughed when I read that part aloud. I smiled too, but my attention moved farther down the page. The tone of the letter changed halfway through. Darius began writing about something he wanted me to understand when I was older.

He wrote that there were people who feared what they couldn't control. Some of those people had begun asking questions about Celestial children. Darius didn't name Varen, but I already knew enough to understand who he meant. He promised he would do everything possible to keep me safe.

I stopped reading and looked at Lyrienne. She was staring at the same part of the page. We'd known Darius became suspicious before I was taken. Now I was reading his thoughts from the time it happened.

I continued until I reached the final lines. Darius wrote that if I ever read the letter without him beside me, I should never believe he'd chosen to leave me. Whatever happened, he would always search for me. He would always try to come home.

My eyes filled before I reached the last sentence. Lyrienne took my hand while I finished it. Darius had kept that promise until he died. He had never stopped looking for me.

Somments

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 317

The letter meant for now

(Isla)

I lowered the letter into my lap. Until recently, i hadn't even known Darius was my father. Now I knew he'd loved me, wanted me, and spent years searching for me after I disappeared. Seeing that promise in his own writing made everything Lyrienne and Orin had told me about him mean even more.

Lyrienne wiped her eyes and looked down at the letter. I knew she was remembering things I could only learn through her. She had lived through those days with him. She had watched his fear grow.

"He meant every word," Lyrienne said. She touched the bottom of the page. "Once Darius believed someone wanted you, protecting you became all he thought about." She remembered how often he checked on me.

I folded the letter carefully. There were still more waiting, but I wasn't ready for another one yet. This letter had answered something inside me that no record ever could. My father had never chosen to disappear from my life.

"Did he ever tell you how afraid he was?" I asked. Darius had written it plainly here. "Or did he try to hide it from you?" I could imagine him doing that.

"He tried." Lyrienne gave a small laugh. "Darius thought hiding his fear would stop me from being afraid too." She had known him far too well for that to work.

I understood why he'd done it. Caius sometimes tried to carry his worries without giving them to me. It never worked with him either. The mate bond made hiding too much nearly impossible.

Lyrienne told me Darius had started checking every person who came near us. He questioned routes before they traveled and changed plans whenever something didn't feel right. At the time, she'd thought some of it was too much. Later, she understood he'd had reason to worry.

"Was that when he went to Orin?" I asked. Orin had already told us Darius came to him before I was born because he distrusted Varen. "Or was that earlier?" I wanted the pieces in the right order.

"Earlier." Lyrienne looked toward the chest. "By the time this was written, Darius already knew Qrin could be trusted." She said there were very few people he trusted completely then.

That explained why Orin had ended up with the chest. Darius hadn't simply left his letters somewhere and hoped they'd survive. He'd put them in the hands of someone he believed would protect them. Centuries later, Orin had given them to me.

I placed the letter with the ones we'd already read. The separate letter Orin had given me remained nearby. It was the one Darius wanted me to receive when I had something of my own to protect. I hadn't opened it yet.

Lyrienne followed my eyes. She knew about the letter because I'd explained it when she arrived. Neither of us had touched it since. I had wanted to understand more of Darius before reading the words he'd meant for this part of my life.

"Do you think I should read it now?" I asked. I picked it up but kept it closed. "Or should I finish the others first?" There was no instruction about that.

The letter menie: new

"Read it when you want to." Lyrienne rested her hand over mine. "Darius wanted you to have it at this point Tiryour life. She wouldn't decide for me.

I looked down at my father's writing Orin had waited centuries to follow Darius's instruction. Somehow that letter had survived long enough to reach me when I was carrying my own child. Waiting longer suddenly didn't feel right.

Before I could open it, someone knocked I placed the letter back on the chest and stood. Caius had said he'd be with Pryor and Zeron for most of the morning. I wondered if they'd found something else about the Keeper descendant.

Caius entered after I opened the door. His attention went to my face before anything else. I knew he could tell I'd been crying. He didn't ask about it immediately.

"Pryor received a reply from my father," Caius said. He came farther inside. "It arrived sooner than I expected." He glanced at Lyrienne before looking at me again.

I forgot about the unopened letter for a moment. Caius had only sent his message a few days ago. We'd expected his father might take longer to answer because of the distance. Apparently he'd wasted no time.

"What did he say?" I asked. Caius had asked whether we could visit him. "Does he want us to come?" I hoped the answer was yes.

"He does." Caius sat beside me. "He said we've waited long enough." There was something in his expression I couldn't read.

I remembered Caius telling me he hadn't seen his father in a little over two years. He'd wanted to visit even before everything with the Council and Silvermere took over our

lives. Now there was another reason to go. His father was about to learn he would be a grandfather.

“Did he say anything about Silvermere?” I asked. That had been part of why Caius finally contacted him. “Does he know why it appeared in those old Crown records?” I wanted that answer too.

“Not in the message.” Caius looked toward me. “He said some things shouldn’t be explained through letters carried across countries.” His father wanted to discuss it when we arrived.

That caught Lyrienne’s attention. She knew Silvermere better than either of us, and she’d heard about the Crown restriction before. Caius’s grandfather had ordered access restricted during his reign. Caius’s father had later possessed territorial records that mentioned Silvermere.

“I’d like to know what he knows,” Lyrienne said. She looked at Caius. “Especially if those records came from your grandfather.” Her interest made sense.

Caius agreed, but we weren’t leaving immediately. Zeron still needed to finish investigating the Keeper descendant, and I wanted more time with Lyrienne. Sera also needed to decide whether there was any reason I shouldn’t travel this early in my pregnancy. Caius wasn’t taking chances.

My eyes returned to Darius’s unopened letter. One father had finally given me answers through words written centuries ago. Soon Caius would sit across from his own father and ask about a secret his family had kept. Both parts of our lives seemed to be moving forward at once.

I reached for Darius’s letter again. Caius saw what I was holding and stayed beside me. Lyrienne took my other hand. This time, I opened it.

4 someone of my own to protect

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 318

Someone of my own to protect

(Isla)

The letter was shorter than expected. Darius had written my name at the top, followed by words I had to read twice. He said if I was holding this letter, then Orin had decided the time had come. That meant my life had become about protecting someone besides myself.

I looked at Lyrienne before continuing. Her eyes were already on the page, but she hadn't seen this letter before. Caius remained beside me, close enough that our arms touched. I began reading the rest aloud.

"My little Isla, if Orin has given you this, then you have someone you would give everything to protect." My voice caught on the words. "I hope that means you have found a life filled with people you love." I stopped there for a moment.

Darius wrote that becoming my father had changed the way he understood fear. Before me, he'd believed courage meant facing danger without allowing fear to control him. After I was born, he learned there were things worth being afraid of losing. Loving someone meant accepting that fear and protecting them.

anyway.

I thought about the baby growing inside me. I already understood more of what Darius meant than I had before I knew I was pregnant. The thought of someone trying to hurt my child brought out something in me I couldn't explain. Vaela felt it too.

'Our pup will be safe, Vaela said. There was no doubt in her words. 'We will protect our pup.' I believed her.

I continued with the letter. Darius warned me not to let fear become the only thing guiding how I protected someone. He wrote that there was a difference between keeping someone safe and stopping them from living. That sounded like something Caius needed to hear too.

I glanced at him. Caius knew exactly why I was looking at him. He didn't need the mate bond to A understand it. I raised my eyebrows before returning to the letter.

"I know what you're thinking," Caius said. He looked at the page in my hands. "Your father doesn't know our situation." He already sounded defensive.

"He knew enough." I couldn't resist smiling. "Maybe you should listen to him." I went back to reading.

Lyrienne covered a laugh with her hand. Darius's next words were about trust. He hoped whoever I loved would be strong enough to stand beside me instead of expecting me to stand behind them. My smile disappeared as I read that part.

I thought about everything Caius and I had faced together. He worried and sometimes tried to protect me more than I wanted, but he'd never asked me to become less than I was. He'd stood beside me before the Council and every territory that questioned me. Darius would have known his daughter hadn't chosen someone who wanted her hidden away.

The next part was written differently. Darius said he didn't know whether the person I was protecting would be my mate, a child, or someone else I loved. He only knew there might come a day when I understood why he'd made the choices he did. He hoped I would forgive him for the ones that had gone wrong.

Someone piny own to protect

My eyes moved to Lyrlenne. She was crying again, but she didn't look away. Darius had written the letter before he knew how badly things would end. He couldn't have known I would read it centuries later.

"I don't know what he wanted forgiveness for," I said. There were still parts of Darius's story we hadn't learned. "He was trying to save me." I couldn't blame him for that.

"He blamed himself for trusting the wrong people," Lyrienne said. She wiped her face. "Even before you disappeared, he questioned every choice he'd made." She wished he'd understood that Varen's actions weren't his fault.

I read the last part silently before deciding I wanted them to hear it too. Darius wrote that if I had a child someday, he hoped I'd tell that child about him. Not because he wanted to be remembered as someone important. He simply wanted his grandchild to know there had once been a man who would have loved them without ever meeting them.

I couldn't read the final sentence aloud. My hand went to my mouth as tears came again. Caius took the letter before it slipped from my fingers. Lyrienne pulled me against her.

For several moments, none of us spoke. My father had written about a grandchild he could never know. Now I was carrying that child while reading his words. Somehow he'd thought far enough ahead to leave a place for himself in a future he would never see.

I placed my hand over my stomach without thinking. There was no change I could feel yet, but I knew our baby was there. Darius would never hold this child. But his grandchild would know who he was.

"I'll tell our baby about him," I said. I looked at Lyrienne and then Caius. "Everything we know." I meant it.

"We will." Caius handed the letter back to me. "Your father will be part of our child's family." He didn't hesitate.

Lyrienne reached for the letter after I folded it. She ran her fingers over Darius's name before giving it back. I could see how much his words had affected her. This wasn't only something he'd left for me anymore.

We returned the letter to the chest with the others. I wasn't reading another one today. There was enough in this letter to think about without adding anything else. I wanted to remember every part of it.

Later, we found Orin in the library with Pryor. He had several Keeper records spread across the table while Pryor compared names from different pages. Zeron hadn't returned yet from speaking with one of his contacts. Caius joined Pryor while Lyrienne stayed with me.

I watched Orin explain something from a record written centuries ago. He didn't speak as someone who'd studied that time. He remembered it because he'd lived through it. For some reason, I'd never really stopped to think about what that meant.

Orin had known Darius. He'd known Varen and Maelor too. He'd carried memories of those people for centuries while almost everyone else from that time had died. Yet Orin was still here.

"Orin," I said. He looked up from the records. "There's something I should have asked you a long time ago." The question suddenly seemed obvious.

"What is it?" Orin asked. He set the record down. "You can ask me anything." His attention remained on

Someone of my own to protect

Hooked at Lyrienne, wondering if she already knew the answer. Then I turned back to Orin. He was a wolf, not à Celestial. There had to be a reason centuries had passed without taking him with them.

"How are you still alive?" asked. "You were there when my father was alive, and you've been telling us about things that happened centuries ago." I waited for his answer.

Orin looked at me for several seconds. Then he glanced at the Keeper records on the table. Whatever the answer was, I had the feeling it belonged to the order itself. He pulled out the chair across from him.

"Because becoming one of the original Keepers required more than taking an oath," he said. "There was a protection ritual." He gestured for me to sit.

I sat across from him. Lyrienne took the chair beside me while Caius turned away from Pryor's records. Another secret about the Keepers was about to be explained. This time, it was one Orin carried in his own blood.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 319

The last opghat keeper

The last original keeper

(Isla)

Orin waited until everyone had settled before speaking again. Pryor left the records where they were and gave him his full attention. I had expected the answer to be connected to the Keepers, but I hadn't expected a ritual. Lyrienne didn't look surprised, which told me she already knew something about it.

"The order was created to protect knowledge that couldn't be left unguarded," Orin said. "Some of what we kept could destroy families, bloodlines and entire territories if it reached the wrong people." He rested his hands on the table.

I thought about everything we'd already found. Records about Celestials had been hidden, removed and changed for centuries. The Keepers had known truths that even the Council didn't have. Someone had decided ordinary lifetimes weren't enough to protect them.

"The original Keepers agreed to a ritual that changed how quickly we aged," Orin continued. "It didn't stop aging, and it didn't make us immortal." His eyes met mine.

That answered the question I'd been asking myself. Orin could still die like any other wolf. His life had simply been stretched far beyond what was normal. Centuries to him weren't the same as centuries to everyone else.

"How many of you went through it?" I asked. I wondered how many wolves from Darius's time could still be alive somewhere. "Were all the original Keepers given the same choice?" I hoped there weren't more people we hadn't found.

"There were twelve of us." Orin sat back in his chair. "Every one of us chose it." His answer surprised me.

Twelve wolves had once carried the same extended life. I immediately wondered where the others were. Orin had spoken about Keeper families and descendants, but never about other original Keepers still living. If the ritual worked for him, it should have worked for them too.

"Are any of the others alive?" I asked. I looked at the records spread across the table. "Or are you the last?" That possibility seemed more likely.

"I'm the last." Orin looked down for a moment. "The ritual gave us more years, but it couldn't protect us from everything." His words answered the question before I could ask it.

Some had died protecting records. Others had been killed when Varen began turning Keeper families against one another. A few survived long enough for age to finally catch them. Orin had outlived every wolf who'd stood beside him when the order began.

I looked at Lyrienne. She had lived through those centuries because she was Celestial. Orin had lived through them because he'd chosen a life tied to protecting knowledge. Their reasons were completely different.

"Does it pass to your children?" I asked. Zeron was searching for a descendant of one of the Keeper families now. "Could someone inherit what happened to you?" I didn't want another surprise later.

"No." Orin shook his head. "The ritual only affected those who took part in it." Descendants were born like other wolves unless they underwent the ritual themselves.

The last ougmal-keeper

Pryor looked interested in that answer There were no records showing the ritual had been performed again after the original order was formed. Orin confirmed it hadn't been. Whatever had been required to perform it had disappeared with the old Keepers.

"Could you do it again?" Caius asked. His question made Orin look toward him. "If you wanted another Keeper to have the same lifespan, could you perform the ritual?" Caius clearly wanted to know whether the knowledge still existed.

"No." Orin's answer came without hesitation. "I knew my part, not every part." The ritual required several Keepers working together.

That meant Orin couldn't create another wolf like himself. When his extended life finally ended, the last living connection to the original Keeper order would end with him. His records suddenly seemed even more important. So did everything he remembered.

"Why didn't you tell us before?" I asked. I wasn't angry, only curious: "You've explained so much about the Keepers." This seemed important too.

"You never asked." Orin gave me a brief smile. "My age stopped being interesting to me a very long time ago." He seemed amused by my expression.

I couldn't help smiling. To me, surviving centuries was impossible to overlook. To Orin, it was simply his life. He'd probably stopped thinking about how strange it seemed to everyone else.

Lyrienne began explaining what she remembered about the old ritual. Celestials had known it existed, but they weren't involved in performing it. The Keepers had guarded the details even from them. She'd never known exactly how it worked.

“Did Darius know?” I asked. My father had trusted Orin enough to leave my letters with him. “Did he know why you could live this long?” I wondered if that was part of why he’d chosen him.

“He did.” Orin nodded. “It was one reason he trusted me with things he wanted protected beyond his own lifetime.” He looked at me as he said it.

That made me think about the special letter I’d just read. Darius hadn’t known whether Orin would survive long enough to give it to me. He’d only known Orin had a better chance than most. Somehow, that chance had been enough.

Before I could ask anything else, Zeron entered the library. He carried several pages with him, and the look on his face told me he’d found what he’d gone looking for. Everyone’s attention moved away from Orin. The Keeper descendant was suddenly our concern again.

“I confirmed where she lives,” Zeron said. He placed the pages beside Pryor. “And I found someone who knew her mother before she died.” He looked toward Caius.

Caius picked up the first page. I moved closer so I could read it with him. Zeron had found no connection between the daughter and any group connected to Varen. Everything still pointed toward an ordinary life.

“What did they say about her mother?” I asked. The woman had traveled north seventeen years ago searching for something. “Did they know why she left?” That was the part we still needed.

“They knew she was searching for someone,” Zeron answered. “She never told them who.” He tapped one of the pages.

The last oughskeeper

Orin looked toward the record. Seventeen years ago, the woman had been searching for him. We already knew that much. What we still didn’t know was why.

I looked at Caius. We had enough information to stop treating the daughter like a possible enemy. She might know nothing about the Keepers or her mother’s search. But she might also have something her mother left behind.

“We should speak to her,” I said. I had wanted Zeron’s investigation finished before we made that decision. “Not as prisoners or investigators.” I wanted her to have a choice.

Caius looked through the pages once more. Nothing Zeron had found gave us a reason to threaten her. We needed answers, but I wasn’t willing to frighten an innocent woman to get them. If she knew anything, I wanted her willing to tell us.

“We’ll send a request,” Caius said. He set the pages down. “She can come to Wraithbone if she agrees.” His decision settled it.

I looked back at Orin. The last original Keeper was sitting only a few feet away, while somewhere in the western territories lived a woman descended from the order he’d helped create. Soon, if she agreed to come, those two parts of the Keeper line would meet. Maybe then we’d finally learn what her mother had been searching for.

MY SECOND

CHANCE MATE

My Second Chance Mate is the Alpha King

Alice W | Completed

Betrayed by her mate, she finds love with his rival

Continue

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 320

Something from her mother

(Isla)

Caius asked Zeron to prepare the message before he left the library. It would explain that we wanted to speak with the woman about her mother’s family without accusing her of anything. She would be free to refuse. If she accepted, Wraithbone would provide safe travel.

“How long before she receives it?” I asked. The western territories weren’t close enough for an answer to come quickly. “I don’t want her frightened by a royal message.” That could make everything harder.

“A few days,” Zeron said. “I’ll have it delivered by someone who can explain why we’re asking.” He gathered the pages from the table.

Once Zeron left, Pryor returned to the records he’d been studying.f stayed beside Orin, thinking about the twelve original Keepers. One thing still bothered me. If the ritual couldn’t be performed again, the Keeper order had lost more than its members.

“What happens to the Keepers when you’re gone?” I asked. Orin had said he was the last of the original twelve. “Does the order end with you?” I hoped it wasn’t that simple.

“The order we knew ended long ago,” Orin said. He glanced at the old records. “What remains are the families, the knowledge and whatever we managed to protect.” He didn’t try to make it sound better.

I thought about the woman we’d just decided to contact. She might not even know her family had once belonged to the Keepers. Her mother had known enough to search for Orin seventeen years ago. Whatever she’d discovered could have died with her.

Pryor began putting several records aside for later. Caius told him to make copies of anything that couldn’t safely leave the library. There were too many pieces of Keeper history scattered across different places. Losing another record wasn’t something any of us wanted.

Lyrienne stayed with Orin while I followed Caius outside. I needed a break from centuries of secrets and dead people. My life had changed enough in the last few weeks without spending every hour searching the past. Vaela agreed for once.

‘Food,’ she said. Her answer wasn’t surprising anymore. ‘Then rest,’ At least she hadn’t mentioned Caius this time.

I smiled and looked at him. “Vaela says I need food and rest.” I was beginning to think my wolf had appointed herself my healer. “She’s getting bossier.” I didn’t think that was possible.

“Vaela is very wise.” Caius placed his hand against my back as we walked. “I think you should listen to her.” Of course he would take her side.

We found something to eat before returning to our quarters. I expected Caius to leave again because he still had work waiting for him. Instead, he remained with me. He’d been doing that more since learning about the baby.

“You don’t have to watch me every second,” I said. I sat down and looked at him. “I’m pregnant, Caius, not injured.” We were going to have this argument many times.

Something of her mother

“I’m aware. Caius sat beside me. “I also want to be here.” His answer left me with less to argue about.

trested against him and let the subject go. Vaela approved, especially when Vorak became more present through the bond. My eyes closed for what I intended to be only a few minutes. I woke much later with Caius still beside me.

Sera came to see me before dinner, Caius had already told her about our plans to visit his father once everything at Wraithbone allowed it. I know exactly why he'd spoken to her before asking me. He wanted her opinion about the journey.

"Travel is fine if everything continues as it is now," Sera said. She had finished checking me and seemed satisfied. "You're early enough that I have no reason to stop you." She began putting away what she'd brought.

"Tell him that again." I pointed toward Caius. "Make sure he hears the part where you said I'm fine." I knew he'd heard perfectly well.

"I heard her." Caius didn't look bothered. "I wanted to make sure." He wasn't apologizing for it.

Sera left us with instructions for me to rest when I needed it and continue eating whenever I was hungry. Nothing she said was difficult. The journey to Caius's father could happen. We only needed to decide when.

In the evening, Lyrienne joined us for dinner. She'd spent part of the afternoon speaking privately with Orin about people they'd both known centuries ago. I wanted to ask what they'd discussed, but she looked tired. There would be time tomorrow.

After we ate, Caius brought up the visit to his father. He wanted to leave after we heard whether the Keeper descendant would come to Wraithbone. If she agreed, he preferred to speak with her before traveling. I thought that made sense.

"How long will you be gone?" Lyrienne asked. She looked between us. "His father lives in another country." She already knew the journey wouldn't be short.

"We haven't decided." Caius rested his arm behind my chair. "It depends on what my father tells us about Silvermere." He also wanted time with his family.

I thought about Nara again. Caius had told me enough stories about her that I already had an idea of what meeting her might be like. She was twenty, persistent and convinced she was right about everything. I wondered whether she'd interrogate me the mornent we met.

"Will Nara know we're coming?" I asked. Caius hadn't mentioned whether his father would tell her. "Or are we going to surprise her too?" I wasn't sure which would be worse.

"She'll know." Caius looked amused by the question. "My father won't keep it from her." He seemed certain.

I nodded, already wondering what Nara would think of me. I would also be meeting my father in law's mate, which made the visit feel even more important. They were part of

Caius's family, but I'd never met either of them. Nara probably had plenty of stories about Caius that he would rather I never hear

Later, Lyrienne returned to where she was staying while Calus and I went back to our quarters. I checked Darius's chest before getting ready to sleep. There were still many letters waiting for me. I wasn't in a hurry anymore.

Sochething for her mother had my father's words now. I had my mother here to tell me the parts that weren't written down. Soon, I would meet Caius's father and sister and learn more about the family he'd come from. Our baby would be born into a family made from pieces of both of us.

A knock came before Cajus could close the curtains. He went to answer it while I remained where I was. Zeron stood outside with a message in his hand. I knew from his presence that something had changed.

"The woman from the western territories sent an answer, Zeron said. "She agreed to come to Wraithbone." He held the message out to Caius.

I looked at the paper as Caius took it. We hadn't expected an answer for several days. Somehow, she'd received our request much sooner than expected. More importantly, she wanted to speak with us.

"She's already on her way," Zeron added. "And she says she has something that belonged to her mother." His words changed everything.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 321

A Message from the past

A message from the past

(sla)

I stood and walked closer to the door. Caius opened the message while Zeron waited outside. There wasn't much written on the page, but I could see the woman's agreement beneath our request. The final lines mentioned the item that had belonged to her mother.

"What does she have?" I asked. If she'd included that information, Caius would have already found it. "Did she say?" I wanted to know before she arrived.

"No." Caius handed the message to me. "She only says her mother left something for her before she died." He remained beside me while I read it.

The woman hadn't explained what the item was or why she thought we needed to see it. She'd written that she'd kept it for twelve years because her mother told her never to throw it away. That meant she'd received it before her mother's death. I wondered whether she'd ever understood why.

"How is she already coming if the message was supposed to take days?" I asked. Zeron had only left us earlier. "She couldn't have received what we sent tonight." Something wasn't adding up.

"She didn't," Zeron said. "My contact found her before the official message was sent and explained that we were trying to reach her." He glanced at the paper in my hand.

That made more sense. Zeron's contact had been close enough to speak with her directly after confirming her identity. She'd chosen to respond immediately instead of waiting for our written request. The fact that she'd agreed so quickly made me wonder whether she'd been waiting for someone to ask about her mother.

"When will she arrive?" I asked. If she was already traveling, it couldn't be several days away. "And is she coming alone?" I didn't want her arriving here without someone she trusted if she was nervous.

"Tomorrow afternoon," Zeron said. "She's traveling with the wolf who contacted her." He looked toward Caius.

Caius told Zeron to make sure no one questioned her when she entered Wraithbone. She was coming as a guest, not someone under suspicion. I was glad he made that clear before she arrived. The last thing we needed was for her to feel trapped.

After Zeron left, I read the message again. There was no name for the object her mother had left her. She hadn't even hinted at what it looked like. All she'd said was that it might belong with the information we were seeking.

A essage from the past

'She knows something,' Vaela said. I wasn't sure that was true. 'Or her mother wanted her to kiwow.

That seemed more likely.

aced the message on the table and looked at Caius. "We should tell Orin she's coming." If her mother had been searching for him seventeen years ago, seeing her daughter might bring back, something he'd forgotten. "He should be there when we speak with her."

"I agree." Caius closed the door. "We'll tell him in the morning." He wasn't going back to the library tonight.

I didn’t argue. Orin had waited centuries for answers about people he’d once known. Another night wouldn’t hurt. I was tired enough that Vaela was already reminding me about sleep.

The next morning, Lyrienne joined us early. She’d already heard from Orin that the woman was coming. News traveled quickly when everyone involved in the same mystery was living under one roof. I told her about the item mentioned in the message.

“Her mother may have left records,” Lyrienne said. “If she was searching for Orin, she must have had a reason.” She looked toward the library.

We found Orin there with Pryor. He already knew about the woman’s arrival, but Zeron hadn’t told him about the item from her mother. His expression changed when I explained it. He immediately asked whether the woman had described what she was bringing.

“She didn’t.” I sat across from him. “Do you have any idea what her mother could have left?” I hoped something from seventeen years ago might mean more to him now.

“No.” Orin Jooked toward the Keeper records. “I never met her mother, and I never knew what she found before she began searching for me.” His answer left us where we’d started.

Pryor had spent the morning reviewing the woman’s family line again. Her mother’s family could be traced back to one of the Keeper families that survived Varen’s attempts to break the order apart. The family name had changed more than once through daughters. That explained why it had taken so long to find them.

We spent the rest of the morning on other matters. I refused to sit in the library staring at the door until she arrived. Lyrienne joined me outside for a while, and Caius disappeared with Zeron to handle pack business. By midday, I was hungry again.

‘You are carrying our pup, Vaela reminded me. She seemed pleased every time my appetite returned. ‘Eat.’ Apparently that was all the explanation she needed.

I ate with Lyrienne while she told me another story about Darius. This one involved him trying to catch a fish with his hands after losing the line from his fishing rod. According to her, he’d refused

A message from the past to admit defeat for nearly an hour. I wished I could have seen it.

Zeron found us not long after we finished eating. One look at him told me why he’d come. The woman had reached Wraithbone earlier than expected. She was waiting with the wolf who had escorted her.

“Where is she?” I asked. I stood immediately. “Did she bring the item?” I couldn’t stop myself from asking.

“She’s in one of the meeting rooms,” Zeron said. “And yes, she brought it.” He stepped aside so we could leave.

I found Caius waiting outside the room with Orin and Pryor. Orin looked calmer than I expected for a wolf about to meet the daughter of someone who’d searched for him seventeen years ago/ Maybe centuries of waiting had taught him patience. I hadn’t learned that yet.

Caius looked at me before opening the door. I entered beside him while the others followed. A woman stood near the table with a small wrapped bundle held against her chest. She looked younger than I’d expected.

Her eyes moved across all of us before stopping on Orin. She stared at him long enough that I wondered if she’d seen his face somewhere before. Orin stared back. Neither of them spoke.

Then the woman placed the bundle on the table. Her hands remained over it for a moment before she pulled them away. Whatever her mother had left was hidden beneath several layers of cloth. She finally looked at me.

“My mother told me someone would come looking for this one day,” she said. “She told me not to open it until they did.” Her eyes returned to Orin.

Orin rose from his chair. The woman began removing the cloth while all of us watched. Beneath it was a small wooden case with an old symbol carved into the top. I recognized the Keeper mark immediately.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 322

The name on the page sla)

25 Pom

The woman removed the last piece of cloth and pushed the case toward the center of the table. The wood was darker around the Keeper mark, as though someone had touched that spot many times. Orin stepped closer but didn’t reach for it. His attention stayed on the symbol.

“Did your mother ever tell you what was inside?” I asked. The woman looked at me before shaking her head. “You really never opened it?” I wasn’t sure I could have waited twelve years.

“She made me promise I wouldn’t.” The woman kept her hands beside the case. “She said opening it at the wrong time could put me in danger.” Her expression told me she’d taken the warning/ seriously.

I understood why she’d obeyed. Her mother had died only five years after traveling north in search of Orin. Whatever she’d discovered might have frightened her enough to protect her daughter from it. Now that daughter had carried the secret straight to Wraithbone.

“What is your name?” I asked. We’d spent so much time calling her the descendant that it suddenly felt wrong. “I should have asked when we came in.” She deserved more than being treated like part of an investigation.

“Elena,” she answered. “Elena Voss.” She glanced at Orin again.

Orin’s reaction was immediate. He took one step toward the table before stopping himself. I remembered the name Mara Voss from everything we’d learned about my disappearance. She had been chosen to help bring me to Silvermere.

“Voss?” Orin asked. His attention remained on Elena. “Was that your mother’s family name?” He waited.

“It was.” Elena nodded. “She gave it to me even though my father had another name.” She looked confused by his reaction.

d toward Caius. Mara’s family line had continued through daughters under different names, or had discovered. Elena’s mother choosing Voss for her daughter suddenly seemed decision. She might have been trying to preserve something.

the records closer and checked the family line again. Elena watched him but other’s name appeared several generations below Mara Voss. There was no that we’d found the right family.

Our ancestor was Mara Voss,” I told her. I didn’t know how much Zeron’s contact had explained

The name on the page

before she agreed to come. “She was part of something that happened to me a long time ago. Elena’s eyes widened.

“My mother used to talk about Mara.” Elena looked down at the case. “She said our family owed her a debt that could never be forgotten.” Her fingers touched the cloth she’d removed.

I wanted to ask what debt she meant, but Orin was already staring at the case differently. He finally reached for it and turned it so the Keeper mark faced him. There was a smaller carving beneath the symbol. I hadn't noticed it from where I stood.

his mark," Orin said. His finger stopped beside the smaller carving. "It belonged to Mara's.

Ine." He looked at Elena.

eant the case was much older than twelve years. Elena's mother had only been its latest lan. I wondered how many women in that family had protected it without knowing everything e. Perhaps each generation had been given the same warning.

Can you open it?" Elena asked. She stepped away from the table. "My mother said I wouldn't be able to." She looked relieved to finally give the responsibility to someone else.

Orin examined the sides before turning the case over. There was no keyhole that I could see. The Keeper mark covered most of the top. Whatever opened it had been hidden well.

"It requires Keeper blood," Orin said. He looked at Elena. "Yours, not mine." His answer surprised her.

Elena stared at him. She had come here thinking the case belonged to people connected to her mother's past. Instead, she was learning that she was part of that past herself. I knew what it felt like to have your family history change in a single conversation.

"How?" Elena asked. Her voice was quieter now. "What am I supposed to do?" She looked at the mark.

Orin explained that she needed to place her palm over the symbol. If the protection remained active recognize her bloodline without requiring her to cut herself. Elena hesitated

5m.

he case. Elena pulled her hand away and stared at it. Orin lifted the s and a small cloth pouch rested inside.

ser to me. I could feel Vaela paying attention as Orin removed the first page. The raded with age but remained readable. Orin's expression changed before he reached at does it say?" I asked. He'd gone completely still. "Orin?" I needed him to answer.

The name on the page

"It's from Mara." Orin looked at me. "She wrote this after Corvin took you." His words pulled every thought back to the night I'd disappeared.

Lyrienne moved closer to the table. Her eyes went straight to the page in Orin’s hand. Mara had been one of the wolves trusted to help get me safely to Silvermere. If she’d written something after Corvin betrayed that plan, she might have known where he’d gone.

Orin c

Wh d reading without speaking. I wanted to take the page from him, but I waited.

a had written had survived centuries through her family. Elena’s mother had until someone finally came looking.

hames here,” Orin said. He placed the page on the table. “Mara was tracking the Keeper, hat helped Varen.” He pointed toward the bottom.

ed closer. Most of the names meant nothing to me. One of them did. I’d seen it before in ords connected to the Council.

aius saw it at the same time. His hand closed around mine as we both read the family name. I looked at Orin, hoping there was another explanation. His face told me there wasn’t.

One of the families Mara had been tracking had never disappeared. Their bloodline had continued through the centuries and eventually reached the modern Council. At the bottom of the page, Mara had written the name of the descendant she believed should never be trusted.

Halvon.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 323

The truth about halvon

The truth about halvon

(Isla)

For several seconds, I could only stare at the name. Halvon had sat across from us during Council meetings and listened while we uncovered what Evander had done. He had answered questions, offered information and helped us reach Orin. Now Mara’s warning sat in front of

“Are we sure this means him?” I asked. The record was centuries old, while Halvon lived now. “Could Mara have meant someone else from his family?” I didn’t want to accuse him because of an ancestor’s actions.

“No.” Orin pointed to the writing beneath the name. “Mara recorded the bloodline, not Halvon himself.” He studied the rest of the page.

I looked again and understood. Mara had warned that the family serving Varen should be watched if its descendants ever gained power again. Halvon’s name had been added much later by someone else. The writing wasn’t the same as Mara’s.

“Who added his name?” I asked. Elena’s mother had possessed the case before she died. “Could your mother have written this?” I looked toward Elena.

“I know her writing.” Elena leaned over the page. “That’s hers.” She touched the space beside

Halvon’s name.

That changed everything. Elena’s mother had known who Halvon was before she died twelve years ago. She’d connected him to a Keeper family that once served Varen. Then she’d hidden the record and told her daughter not to open the case.

“She was searching for you seventeen years ago,” I said to Orin. Her mother had died five years after that journey. “Maybe this was why.” The timing made more sense now.

“It could be.” Orin picked up another page. “But we still don’t know what she believed Halvon had done.” He began reading.

I was glad he said it. A family connection wasn’t proof that Halvon had continued what his ancestors started. I knew better than most what it felt like to be judged because of things other people had done. We needed facts before confronting him.

Caius remained beside me while Pryor examined the next record. There were dates written beside several names. Some went back centuries, while others had been added within the last twenty years. Elena’s mother had clearly continued Mara’s work.

The truth about halvon

“There’s more about Halvon here,” Pryor said. He turned the page so Caius could see it. “Your mother was following his movements.” His attention went to Elena.

Elena looked confused. She said her mother had never mentioned the Council or Halvon at home. As far as she’d known, her mother had spent her life keeping records for several western families. That work could have given her access to information without anyone questioning her.

“What movements?” I asked. Halvon represented the western alliance. Traveling between territories wouldn’t have been unusual for him. “Anything that shouldn’t be there?” I waited for Pryor to finish reading.

“Several trips north.” Pryor traced the dates with his finger. “None appear in the Council travel records.” He looked toward Caius.

My thoughts went straight to Silvermere. North didn’t automatically mean Halvon had gone there, but I couldn’t ignore the possibility. His father, Orin, had spent years hidden near Ravenspire. Halvon had also been the one who led us to him.

Orin took the page from Pryor. He read the dates before checking another record inside the case. His expression changed again. This time he looked toward Elena.

“Your mother came north after Halvon,” Orin said. “These dates are only days apart.” He placed both pages beside each other.

Elena sat down. She looked as though she was trying to remember something from childhood. Her mother had left for that journey when Elena was young. Twelve years had passed since her death.

“She came home frightened,” Elena said. Her eyes remained on the pages. “I remember that.”

She swallowed before continuing.

No one interrupted her. Elena explained that her mother had returned earlier than expected and spent days going through old family belongings. Not long afterward, the wooden case had been placed in Elena’s care. Her mother had refused to explain what had happened.

“Did she ever mention Halvon?” I asked. Even hearing the name once could matter now. “Anything at all?” I watched her think.

“Once.” Elena looked at me. “She told my father there was someone on the Council who knew too much.” Her hands rested in her lap.

Caius turned toward Pryor. That statement still wasn’t enough to prove betrayal, but it gave us a reason to investigate. Halvon couldn’t know we’d found these records. If he was hiding something, warning him would only give him time to cover it.

“We keep this in this room,” Caius said. His attention moved across everyone present. “Halvon isn’t contacted until we know exactly what we’re dealing with.” His decision was immediate.

I agreed. Halvon had helped us more than once, and part of me still wanted there to be another explanation. But Mara's family had spent centuries guarding this information. Elena's mother had been frightened enough to hide it from her own daughter.

Orin opened the cloth pouch from inside the case. A small metal piece fell into his palm. It looked like part of something larger, with the Keeper symbol carved on one side. On the other was a mark I didn't recognize.

Lyrienne leaned closer. She knew the mark. I could tell before she said anything. Her eyes went from the metal piece to the old pages.

"I've seen that symbol before," Lyrienne said. "It was used on the protected entrances near Silvermere." She looked at Orin.

My attention returned to the dates recording Halvon's northern journeys. The connection I hadn't wanted to make was becoming harder to ignore. Elena's mother had followed him north, returned frightened and hidden evidence for her daughter to protect. Now we had something connected to Silvermere in the same case.

"Then we find out where he went," I said. I looked at Caius. "Before Halvon learns we know anything." I wasn't willing to move against him without proof.

Caius nodded and handed the travel records to Zeron. We would investigate quietly while Halvon continued believing nothing had changed. If he was innocent, the truth would clear him. If he wasn't, I wanted to know exactly what he'd been hiding.

Vaela had remained silent through most of the conversation. Now her attention settled on the metal piece in Orin's hand. A warning came through our bond before I could reach for it. She didn't want me touching it.

'There is something on it, Vaela said. 'Something hidden.'

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 324

The second name

The second name

(Isla)

I stopped before my hand reached the metal. Vaela's warning had come with a certainty I had learned not to ignore. Orin noticed and lowered his hand toward the table. Caius looked between me and the object.

“Don’t touch it yet,” I said. I kept my eyes on the mark Lyrienne had recognized. “Vaela senses something hidden in it.” I didn’t know what that meant yet.

Orin placed the piece beside the records. No one reached for it again. I let Vaela focus on it without trying to use her gift. She had already warned me that something was wrong.

‘What do you feel?‘ I asked her. Her attention stayed on the metal. ‘Can you tell what it is?‘ I waited for her answer.

‘Memory, Vaela said. ‘It is holding something.‘ She seemed certain.

That made me look at the piece differently. Vaela could find memories left behind in objects and places, but using that gift took something from her. She had only recently begun understanding what she could do. I wasn’t going to push her without knowing whether it was necessary.

“She thinks there’s a memory attached to it,” I said. Everyone knew enough about Vaela’s gift to understand what I meant. “I might be able to see something if I touch it.” Caius immediately looked unhappy.

“No.” Caius stepped closer to me. “Not until we know whether it can hurt you.” His eyes went to the metal.

Normally, I would have argued with him. This time, I was carrying our child, and I didn’t know what touching the piece might do. Vaela’s gift had exhausted us before. I wasn’t willing to take that chance without asking Sera.

“Fine,” I said. Caius looked surprised that I’d agreed so easily. “But we’re not ignoring it.” I pointed toward the piece.

“We won’t.” Caius picked up a clean cloth and covered it without touching the metal itself. “Sera can look at you before we decide anything.” He wasn’t going to change his mind.

Lyrienne moved closer to the table again. She studied the covered piece as if trying to remember where she’d seen one like it. Silvermere had used marked pieces at protected entrances centuries ago: That alone didn’t explain why Elena’s mother had possessed one.

The second name

“Could it have opened an entrance?” I asked. If it had come from Silvermere, perhaps it was some kind of key. “Would someone need it to get through the protections?” I looked at

Lyrienne.

“Some entrances required more than blood,” Lyrienne said. “The people trusted with access carried markers that allowed the protections to recognize them.” She looked toward the cloth.

Orin understood before I did. He pulled one of Elena’s mother’s records closer and checked the dates again. If Halvon had traveled north without recording those journeys, Elena’s mother might have followed him. The metal marker could have been found during that trip.

“Do you remember your mother having this before she went north?” I asked Elena. She had been young, but the shape was unusual enough that she might remember it. “Anything similar?” I waited.

“No.” Elena shook her head. “The case appeared after she came home.” She looked at the cloth covering the metal.

That gave us another piece without answering the larger question. Elena’s mother could have found the marker while following Halvon. She could also have received it from someone else.

We needed to know where it had been before she placed it inside the case.

Pryor began reading the remaining pages. Most contained names and dates, but one page was different from the others. It had only a few lines written in Elena’s mother’s hand. He passed it to Caius.

“She wrote about the marker,” Caius said. His eyes moved across the page. “She found it near a northern boundary after following someone there.” He read the rest silently.

My eyes went to Elena. Her mother had left more answers than we’d realized. She’d been careful enough not to write Halvon’s name beside that statement. But the travel dates gave us a reason to suspect who she’d followed.

“Does she say what happened?” I asked. I wanted to know why she’d returned home frightened. “Or what she saw there?” I moved beside Caius.

“Only that she couldn’t continue.” Caius handed me the page. “She believed she’d been noticed.” His expression told me he understood the danger she’d faced.

I read the final line myself. Elena’s mother had written that she would keep what she’d found hidden until someone from the old order came looking. She hadn’t known whether that would happen during her lifetime. So she’d prepared Elena to protect it after her death.

Orin looked at Elena for a long moment. Her mother had spent years carrying a duty she

The second name might never have fully understood. She'd still protected what Mara's family had passed down.

Orin seemed to understand what that had cost.

"Your mother kept her promise to our order," Orin said. His voice remained calm. "Even when no Keeper came to help her." He looked at the case.

Elena's eyes filled with tears. She turned away briefly before looking back at him. For twelve years, she'd carried something because her mother told her to. Now she finally knew why.

Zeron took the pages Caius had given him. He would start checking Halvon's movements against every northern journey Elena's mother had recorded. Pryor would search Council records for anything connected to the protected entrances. We had enough to investigate without letting Halvon know.

I looked at the covered metal piece again. There might be a memory inside it that could answer everything faster. But I wasn't going to risk myself or the baby simply because I was impatient. The truth had waited this long.

'It will show us,' Vaela said. Her certainty hadn't changed. 'When we are ready.' I agreed with her.

Caius sent for Sera before anyone left the room. I already knew she might tell me not to use Vaela's gift while pregnant. If she did, I would listen. There were other ways to uncover what

Halvon had done.

Orin gathered the remaining pages and placed them beside Mara's original record. Elena stayed near him, asking questions about the Keeper line her mother had protected. I left them together and moved toward Caius. He was still watching the covered marker.

"We find another way if Sera says no," I said. I wanted him to hear it from me before he started worrying. "I'm not risking our baby for a memory." I meant every word.

Caius reached for my hand. Before he could answer, the door opened and Zeron returned sooner than expected. He carried a Council travel ledger Pryor had sent someone to retrieve. One page was already open.

"I found one of the dates," Zeron said. He placed the ledger in front of us. "Halvon wasn't traveling alone." He pointed to another name written beside Halvon's.

I followed his finger across the page. The second name belonged to someone we'd already trusted during this investigation. Someone who knew far more about our search than I wanted them to know.

Chief Elder Sorin.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 325

The attack

(Isla)

I stared at Sorin's name before looking at Zeron. Of all the people I expected to find beside Halvon, Sorin wasn't one of them. He had supported us through the investigation and never tried to stop us from searching. I refused to decide what the ledger meant without hearing his explanation.

"When was this journey?" I asked. The date had to match one Elena's mother recorded. "Was Sorin Chief Elder then?" I needed to understand why they had traveled together.

"No," Zeron said. "He was already on the Council, but he didn't become Chief Elder until years later." He turned the ledger toward me.

That mattered, though I wasn't sure how much. Council members could have traveled together without anything being wrong. The missing travel record bothered me more. If this journey was harmless, why wasn't it listed with the others?

"Send for Sorin," Caius said. His eyes remained on the ledger. "Don't tell him what we found." His order left no room for questions.

Zeron left to send the message. Caius had ordered him not to tell Sorin why we wanted to see him, only that his presence was required at Wraithbone. If Sorin left as soon as he received it, he could reach us by tomorrow evening. Until then, we would keep what we'd found inside this room.

I looked toward Elena, who seemed uncomfortable hearing another Council member connected to her mother's records. She had already learned more about her family today than she'd expected. I didn't want to drag her deeper into this before we knew what Sorin would say. She deserved time to understand what we'd already told her.

Caius asked Pryor to take Elena somewhere she could rest. Orin offered to go with them and answer whatever questions she had about the Keepers. Elena took the wooden case

but left the records and marker with us. Soon only Lyrienne, Caius and I remained in the room.

“You trust Sorin,” Lyrienne said. She knew enough about everything that had happened to understand why his name bothered me. “I’ve seen that.” She waited for my answer.

“I do.” I looked at the ledger again. “That’s why I’m giving him the chance to explain this before I decide anything.” I wasn’t going to judge him because his name appeared beside Halvon’s.

Sorin had been difficult at times, especially when the Council first became involved in our

The attack bond. But he’d also admitted when the Council failed me. He had supported the findings against Evander and spoken to me privately before leaving Wraithbone. None of that proved he was innocent, but it mattered.

Caius closed the ledger. There was nothing more we could learn from staring at Sorin’s name. We had already spent enough time going through records and trying to understand things that happened years ago. Sorin could answer for his own actions when he arrived.

“We don’t change anything until then,” Caius said. “No one outside this room needs to know we’re questioning that journey.” He looked toward the door.

I agreed with him. If Halvon was hiding something, I didn’t want him hearing that we’d found his old travel records. Sorin’s name could mean nothing more than two Council members traveling together. Tomorrow evening, we would know more.

My attention returned to the covered metal marker. Vaela still sensed the memory attached to it, but she wasn’t urging me to touch it. I was relieved by that. Whatever it held could wait until we knew whether using her gift was safe.

‘You are not disappointed?‘ I asked Vaela. She had been curious about every part of our past since her awakening. ‘We might not touch it at all.‘ I waited.

‘The pup matters more,‘ Vaela answered. ‘We can wait.‘ Her response settled the decision for

I looked toward Caius and found him watching me. He probably knew Vaela and I were speaking from the way my attention had gone elsewhere. Before he could ask, footsteps approached from the hallway. They were moving fast.

The door opened and one of the Wraithbone guards entered. He had clearly come directly from his post. His arrival had nothing to do with Sorin. Caius turned toward him immediately.

“Alpha King Caius, there’s been an attack at the western gate,” the guard said. “The visitor who arrived with Elena was targeted.” He waited for Caius’s order.

I was already moving toward the door. The visitor was Zeron’s contact, the same wolf who had reached Elena before our formal message and traveled with her to Wraithbone. Someone attacking him only hours after Elena arrived couldn’t be ignored. This wasn’t something buried in a record anymore.

“Is he alive?” I asked. I needed to know whether we could speak to him. “And where is Elena?” My thoughts went immediately to her safety.

“He’s alive,” the guard said. “The healer is with him now, and Elena is still inside the pack house under guard.” He stepped aside.

Caius told the guard to double protection around Elena and close the western gate. No one who had arrived today would leave until we knew what happened. The attacker could still be somewhere near Wraithbone. We couldn’t assume the danger had passed.

Lyrienne came with us as we left the room. I could feel Vaela’s attention change as we moved through the pack house. The records had given us questions, but the attack gave us something we could act on. Someone had made a mistake by coming this close to us.

Zeron met us before we reached the injured wolf. He had returned after sending the message to Sorin and had already heard about the attack. His face told me the news was worse than we’d been given. Caius stopped in front of him.

“The attacker got away,” Zeron said. “But the contact saw his face.” He looked directly at Caius.

That was more than I’d expected. If the injured wolf could identify whoever attacked him, we wouldn’t have to spend days guessing. We could finally put a face to someone working against us now. I wanted to hear the name myself.

“Who was it?” I asked. Zeron looked at me before answering. “Did he recognize him?” I waited.

“He did,” Zeron said. “He’s seen him before in the western territories.” His attention returned to Caius.

I felt Caius reach for my hand. Halvon represented the western alliance, and Elena’s mother had followed him north years ago. Now someone from those same territories had attacked the wolf who brought Elena here. Whatever had been hidden was no longer staying hidden.

“Take us to him,” Caius ordered. “I want the name before anyone else learns he survived.” He started toward the healer’s room.

I followed beside him. Sorin wouldn't arrive until tomorrow evening, and we would hear his explanation then. Today, we had someone alive who might tell us exactly who had sent an attacker to Wraithbone. For once, we didn't need another old record to find our next answer.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 326

He knows about the case

(Isla)

We found the injured wolf with Sera. A cut ran along his arm, and blood had stained part of his shirt, but he was awake. Sera was cleaning the wound when we entered. His eyes went straight to Zeron.

"Tell them what you told me," Zeron said. He remained near the door while Caius and I approached. "Start with where you saw him before." He waited for the wolf to answer.

"His name is Renn," the wolf said. "I've seen him working for different packs in the western territories." He glanced toward Caius. "Mostly carrying messages between ranked wolves."

The name meant nothing to me. I looked at Caius, but his expression told me he didn't recognize it either. That didn't surprise me when there were countless wolves spread across the territories. What mattered was who Renn worked for.

"Did you see him clearly?" Caius asked. He stopped a few feet from the injured wolf. "I need you to be certain." His attention remained on him.

"I'm certain." The wolf adjusted his arm while Sera finished wrapping it. "He spoke to me before he attacked." He looked toward me.

That caught me off guard. Someone trying to kill him shouldn't have needed a conversation first. Unless killing him hadn't been the original plan. I moved closer.

"What did he say?" I asked. The injured wolf looked uncomfortable. "Tell me exactly what you remember." I waited.

"He asked where Elena was." The wolf looked toward Zeron. "I told him I didn't know anyone by that name." He took a breath.

My concern for Elena grew. Renn hadn't attacked a random visitor at our gate. He'd been looking for her. Somehow he'd learned Elena had traveled to Wraithbone before we'd even had time to understand what she'd brought with her.

"What happened after you refused?" I asked. I already suspected the answer. "Did he ask about anything else?" I kept my eyes on him.

"He asked if she brought the box." The wolf glanced around the room. "I didn't answer him." He looked at the bandage on his arm.

The wooden case. Whoever sent Renn knew exactly what Elena's mother had left behind. That meant the secret hadn't remained within her family as completely as we'd believed.

Someone had been waiting for Elena to open it or bring it to the wrong people.

Caius asked where the attack happened. The wolf explained that he'd gone toward the western gate because one of the guards had told him someone outside was asking for hin Renn had been waiting beyond the gate. He'd attacked when the wolf refused to answer hi questions.

"How did he escape?" Caius asked. Wraithbone's guards wouldn't have simply allowed him walk away. "Was he alone?" His gaze moved to Zeron.

"He shifted and ran west," Zeron said. "Two guards followed, but he crossed beyond our territory before they could catch him." He folded his arms.

That direction bothered me. Halvon represented the western alliance, but I reminded mysel again that it wasn't proof. Renn could have run west because it was the easiest route away from Wraithbone. We needed more than suspicion.

"Can you find him?" I asked Zeron. He already knew people throughout the territories. "Without anyone learning why we're looking?" I didn't want Halvon warned.

"I can try." Zeron looked toward Caius. "If he's worked as a messenger, someone will know where he stays." He waited for permission.

"Find him," Caius said. "Alive." He glanced toward the injured wolf.

Zeron left immediately. Sera told the injured wolf he needed rest and asked us to give him some space. His wound wasn't dangerous, but he'd lost enough blood to leave him weak. I thanked him before following Caius outside.

"Elena needs to know," I said. Someone had come to Wraithbone asking for her by name. Keeping that from her wouldn't protect her. "She might recognize Renn." I looked toward

Caius.

“We’ll speak to her now.” Caius took my hand. “She doesn’t leave the pack house without guards.” His concern wasn’t only about the case anymore.

We found Elena with Orin and Pryor. She stood as soon as we entered, and the look on my face must have warned her. I didn’t hide what happened. She listened without interrupting until I gave her the attacker’s name.

“Renn?” Elena asked. The fear on her face disappeared beneath confusion. “I know him.” She stared at me.

That was the last answer I expected. Orin looked at her while Pryor stopped what he was doing. Caius stepped closer to the table.

He knows about the case

“How?” I asked. If Renn had been around Elena before today, this went further back than he journey to Wraithbone. “Who is he to you?” I waited.

“He worked with my mother.” Elena looked toward the wooden case. “He used to come to o home when I was a child.” Her face changed as another memory returned.

I sat across from her. Elena explained that Renn had brought her mother records from different western packs. Sometimes he stayed long enough for them to speak privately. Elena had never known what they discussed.

“Did he come after your mother died?” I asked. Twelve years was a long time for him to disappear and suddenly return now. “Did you ever see him again?” I watched her.

“Once.” Elena looked at me. “A few weeks after she died, he asked whether she’d left anythin for me.” She glanced at the case.

That was enough to make everyone understand. Renn had known something existed twelve years ago. Elena’s mother had protected the case from him, whether she knew he was dangerous or simply didn’t trust him. Now he’d followed Elena all the way here.

Orin opened one of the records again. He searched through Elena’s mother’s notes until he found what he wanted. There, beside one of the later entries, was a single initial followed by several dates. Elena leaned over and recognized it immediately.

“That’s him,” Elena said. “R for Renn.” She looked at Orin.

The dates began before Elena’s mother traveled north. They continued for several years afterward, then stopped shortly before her death. Renn hadn’t simply worked with her.

“He was helping her investigate,” I said. The answer was becoming clearer. “Which means he might know what she discovered about Halvon.” I looked at Caius.

A knock came at the door before he could respond. One of the guards entered carrying a folded message that had just arrived for Caius. It wasn't from Sorin. The seal belonged to the western alliance.

Caius opened it and read the short message. His expression changed before he handed it to me. Halvon had written it himself.

He was coming to Wraithbone.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 327

(Isla)

I read the message again before placing it on the table. Halvon hadn't asked whether he could come. He'd written that Council matters required him to speak with Caius and that he expected to arrive this evening. He had no idea Sorin had also been called to Wraithbone.

"Why now?" I asked. His timing bothered me more than the message itself. "He couldn't have received anything from us." I looked at Caius.

"He didn't." Caius picked up the message and checked it again. "I haven't contacted Halvon since the Council left Wraithbone." His attention went to the western seal.

Elena looked worried. Renn had appeared looking for her, and now Halvon was coming from the same part of the territories. It could still be a coincidence, but there were becoming too many of them. I wasn't willing to ignore that.

"Does he know I'm here?" Elena asked. Her hands moved away from the wooden case. "Could

Renn have told him?" She looked toward Caius.

"We don't know who Renn answers to," Caius said. "Until we do, you stay under protection." He looked toward the door.

Orin closed the case and moved it away from Elena. The records could remain hidden while Halvon was here. I didn't want him knowing we'd found anything connected to his family. We needed to see what he did when he believed we knew nothing.

"Let him come," I said. Caius turned toward me. "We already wanted answers from him." I wasn't suggesting we confront him yet.

Caius considered it before nodding. Halvon would be treated exactly as he normally would when visiting Wraithbone. No accusation and no mention of Elena's mother would be made. We would let him believe his arrival had changed nothing.

Pryor gathered the records. He would keep them somewhere Halvon couldn't reach them. Orin took the metal marker separately. Elena remained with us.

"There's something else," Elena said. She looked toward the door after Pryor left. "Halvon has met me before." She seemed uncertain why she hadn't remembered sooner.

I stared at her. That was something we needed to know before he arrived. Elena had already remembered Renn from her childhood. Halvon being connected directly to her made the situation different.

Watch him

"When?" I asked. I moved back toward the table. "Was your mother alive?" I waited for her answer.

"Yes." Elena nodded. "I was young, but I remember him coming to our home once." She looked at the place where the case had been.

Orin asked her to think about what happened that day. Elena remembered her mother sending her away while she spoke with Halvon. She hadn't heard what they discussed. She only remembered her mother being angry after he left.

"Did he ever come back?" I asked. If Halvon knew Elena's mother personally, he might have known about her investigation. "Or ask about your mother after she died?" I watched her.

"Not that I remember." Elena shook her head. "I never saw him again." She looked troubled b the memory.

That was enough for now. We didn't need to pull apart every memory Elena had before

Halvon arrived. What mattered was that he had known her mother. If he saw Elena here, he would know immediately who she was.

"We keep them apart," Caius said. His decision came quickly. "Halvon doesn't know Elena is here unless we decide he should." He looked toward Orin.

Orin agreed to stay with her. Elena would remain in another part of the pack house with guards outside. If Halvon had come because of her, his behavior might tell us more when he couldn't find her. I hoped we were wrong about him.

Sera entered before we could leave. She had finished caring for the injured wolf and wanted to check on me after Caius sent for her earlier. The metal marker was already gone, but I explained what Vaela had sensed. Sera didn't need long to give her answer.

"Not while you're pregnant," Sera said. "We don't know what using that gift could take from you now." Her answer was exactly what I'd expected.

"I already decided I wouldn't risk it." I rested my hand against Caius's arm. "We'll find another way." I wasn't disappointed.

Sera seemed satisfied with that. She asked how I felt and whether I'd eaten enough today. I answered before Caius could do it for me. That earned me a look from him.

By late afternoon, the pack house had returned to its usual activity. Only the extra guards around Elena and the western gate showed anything had changed. Zeron was still searching for Renn. Sorin wouldn't reach Wraithbone until tomorrow evening.

Halvon arrived before sunset. He came with two wolves from the western alliance and left

Watch him them outside the main meeting room when Caius received him. I stood beside Caius rathe than sitting. Halvon greeted us as though this were an ordinary visit.

"Alpha King, Queen Isla." Halvon looked between us. "I apologize for arriving without waitir for a reply." He took the seat Caius indicated.

"What Council matter couldn't wait?" Caius asked. He remained standing beside me. "Your message didn't explain." His eyes stayed on Halvon.

Halvon reached into his coat and removed a folded document. He placed it on the table without looking around the room. Nothing about him suggested he knew what we'd discovered. That only made me watch him more carefully.

"So one has been asking questions in the western territories," Halvon said. "Questions aold Council journeys and northern boundaries." He looked directly at Caius.

dy went still. Zeron had only begun searching for Renn today. Elena had arrived only ago. Yet Halvon already knew someone was asking about those journeys.

ho?" I asked. I wanted to hear what name he gave us. "And why does that concern you?" I ept my attention on him.

"I don't know yet," Halvon said. "But one of my people disappeared after speaking to the wol asking the questions." He leaned back in his chair.

Caius didn’t react. I knew him well enough to understand that he had caught the same problem I had. Halvon had traveled here much too quickly for this to have started today. Whatever brought him to Wraithbone had been happening before Elena arrived.

Then Halvon looked at me. His eyes stayed on my face for several seconds before moving to Caius. A strange feeling passed through my bond with Vaela.

‘Watch him,’ she warned.

I didn’t answer her. I didn’t need to.

I already was.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 328

He knew sla)

Halvon turned his attention back to the document he’d brought. I wanted to ask how he’d learned about the questions so quickly, but doing that would tell him we’d noticed the timing. Caius seemed to have the same thought. He finally took the seat across from Halvon.

“When did this wolf disappear?” Caius asked. He picked up the document but didn’t open it. “And when were you informed?” His question sounded ordinary.

“Three days ago.” Halvon rested his hands on the table. “I received word yesterday morning and began looking into it.” He watched Caius.

That explained why he’d had time to reach Wraithbone. It also meant whatever was happening hat started before Elena came here. Her arrival might not have caused Halvon’s visit after all. I wasn’t sure whether that made me feel better.

“Who disappeared?” I asked. Halvon looked at me again. “You said he was one of your people.” I waited.

“Tomas Vale.” Halvon shifted his attention to Caius. “He keeps travel records for several western packs and occasionally provides information to the Council.” He paused.

A record keeper. Elena’s mother had also worked with records from western packs. Renn had carried information between her and others. The same small group of people seemed to keep appearing around the old investigation.

“Was he connected to Renn?” I asked. I watched Halvon closely when I said the name. “Do you know him?” I didn’t explain why I was asking.

Halvon’s face changed. It lasted only a moment, but I saw it /He knew exactly who Renn was.

“Yes.” Halvon sat straighter. “Renn has carried messages for the western alliance.” His eyes remained on me.

He didn’t ask why I’d mentioned him. That bothered me. If he knew nothing about what had happened today, he should have wondered why Renn’s name had entered this conversation. Instead, he waited.

“Renn was at Wraithbone today,” Caius said. Halvon finally looked surprised. “He attacked one of our visitors outside the western gate. Caius gave him nothing more.

“I wasn’t aware of that.” Halvon’s attention moved between us. “Was he captured?” His question came quickly.

Poing

“No.” Caius placed Halvon’s document back on the table. “He escaped.” He didn’t mention that the injured wolf had survived.

Halvon nodded once. I couldn’t tell whether he was relieved or disappointed. Vaela remained alert but she didn’t speak again. I trusted her enough to keep watching.

“Why was Renn here?” Halvon asked. He looked at Caius rather than me. “Did the visitor/know him?” He waited.

There it was. He wanted information, and he was trying to get it without asking too much. Caius didn’t answer immediately. The silence forced Halvon to wait.

“That’s being investigated,” Caius said. “If Renn works for your alliance, I expect your help finding him.” His eyes stayed on Halvon.

“Of course.” Halvon nodded. “I’ll send word to every western pack before morning. He reached for the document he’d brought.

I wondered whether that would help us or warn Renn. Until we knew more, I didn’t want Halvon controlling the search. Zeron was already looking without anyone knowing why.

“There’s no need,” I said. Halvon turned toward me. “Zeron is handling it.” I kept my expression calm.

Halvon didn’t argue. He said Zeron was capable and left the matter there. Still, something about the way he accepted it made me think he was measuring how much we knew. I wished Sorin were already here.

Caius finally opened the document. It contained a short list of questions Tomas had supposedly been asked before disappearing. Silvermere wasn’t named anywhere. The questions concerned old northern routes, Council travel and records removed years ago.

“Who gave you this?” Caius asked. He turned the page over even though nothing was written on the back. “Tomas?” He looked at Halvon.

“His brother.” Halvon pointed toward the first line. “Tomas told him about the questions before he disappeared.” He leaned forward.

That gave us someone we could speak to. Caius asked where Tomas’s brother lived. Halvon gave him the pack name and offered to arrange a meeting, Caius declined and said Zeron would handle that too.

Halvon’s mouth tightened. It was the clearest sign of frustration I’d seen from him since he arrived. He recovered quickly and stood. His supposed reason for coming had been dealt with.

“I’ll remain at Wraithbone tonight if you allow it,” Halvon said. “I’d rather leave after we’ve learned

..

He knew whether Renn has been found.” He looked toward Caius.

“You can stay.” Caius rose from his chair. “Rooms will be prepared for you and your men.” He called for a guard.

I wasn’t sure I wanted Halvon sleeping beneath the same roof as Elena. Refusing him now would only tell him something was wrong. We would simply make sure he never got near her.

The guard entered and waited beside the door. Caius instructed him to show Halvon to a guest room. Halvon thanked him before turning toward me. His gaze dropped briefly before returning to my face.

“Congratulations, Queen Isla,” Halvon said. “I hadn’t heard the news until I arrived, His eyes moved toward Caius.

Every thought in my head stopped. We hadn’t announced my pregnancy. Outside this pack house, only the people we’d chosen to tell knew about our baby. Halvon should not have known.

“Congratulations for what?” I asked. I wanted to hear him say it. “What news did you hear?” I watched him.

Halvon seemed to realize his mistake. He looked at Caius before answering. The guard beside the door remained silent.

“That you’re expecting a child,” Halvon said. “One of my men heard it after we arrived.” He gave a small nod.

I didn’t believe him. Neither did Vaela. The knowledge hadn’t been shared with the wolves outside, and Caius had made sure it stayed that way until we were ready. Someone had told Halvon before he entered this room.

Halvon left with the guard. Caius waited until the door closed before looking at me. I could feel anger through our bond now. Halvon had just given us another reason not to trust him.

“He knew,” I said. There was no reason to pretend otherwise. “Before he came into this room, he knew about our baby.” I looked toward the closed door.

Caius reached for me. Somewhere inside Wraithbone, Halvon was now sleeping only rooms away from people he might have spent years trying to find, Sorin wouldn’t arrive until tomorrow evening. Until then, we had to make sure Halvon learned nothing else.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 329

Helied

He lied sla)

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The list wasn’t long.

“Someone told him,” Caius said. “And I want to know who.” His anger came through our bond..

“We don’t know when he learned.” I didn’t want us accusing anyone without knowing more. “He could have known before he reached Wraithbone.” That possibility bothered me most.

Caius called the guard back into the room. The wolf returned within moments and stood near the door. He had been there when Halvon claimed one of his men heard about my pregnancy. That gave us somewhere to start.

“Find out who Halvon and his men spoke to after entering Wraithbone,” Caius ordered. “I want every name.” He released my hand.

The guard left to begin checking. I moved toward the window while Caius picked up the documen

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Vale was now one of them.

‘He watches you differently, Vaela said. Her earlier warning returned to me. ‘I don’t like it.‘ She stayed focused on Halvon.

Neither do I.‘ I thought about the way his eyes had moved to me before he offered his congratulations. ‘But we need to know what he wants.‘ I wasn’t going to let fear decide what we did.

Caius came beside me. I told him what Vaela had said. He didn’t dismiss it, especially after everything we’d found today. Halvon would remain under watch until Sorin arrived.

“We should tell Zeron what happened,” I said. “If Halvon knows about the baby, he might know

Elena is here too.” I looked at Caius.

“I’ll send someone to find him.” Caius glanced toward the hallway. “You stay away from Halvon tonight.” His expression told me that part wasn’t open for discussion.

“I wasn’t planning to invite him to dinner.” I couldn’t help the response. Caius stared at me for a moment before shaking his head.

A few minutes later, Pryor returned without Elena or Orin. We told him Halvon had arrived and knew about my pregnancy. He looked as concerned as I expected. Then Calus showed him the

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That meant Halvon hadn’t invented him. Pryor remembered receiving records from Tomas during earlier reviews of western territories. He hadn’t heard anything about him disappearing/If Halvon had already reported it to the Council, Pryor should have known.

“Would Sorin know?” I asked. He was still Chief Elder even when Council members were away from one another. “Halvon called this a Council matter.” I looked at Pryor.

“He should.” Pryor placed the document down. “A missing Council source should have been reported to the Chief Elder immediately.” He looked toward Caius.

Another problem with Halvon’s story. If he hadn’t told Sorin, coming directly to Wraithbone made even less sense. We couldn’t ask Sorin until tomorrow evening. Halvon had chosen an inconvenient time to place himself under our roof.

The door opened again, and Zeron entered. He had returned sooner than I expected. His clothes showed he’d been outside, but he wasn’t injured. I immediately searched his face for an answer.

“I found where Renn went after leaving Wraithbone,” Zeron said. “He didn’t return west.” He approached Caius.

That surprised me. The guards had seen him run toward the western boundary. I’d assumed he’d continued in that direction after crossing it. Zeron had found otherwise.

“Where did he go?” I asked. If Renn hadn’t returned to the western territories, he could still be nearby. “Did you find him?” I waited.

“Not yet.” Zeron placed a small folded map on the table. “He changed direction after crossing the boundary and headed north.” He pointed to the route.

North again. The same direction Halvon had traveled years ago. The same direction Elena’s mother had followed him. I was beginning to hate how often everything led there.

Caius told Zeron about Halvon’s arrival. He also explained what Halvon had said about Tomas disappearing three days ago. Zeron’s reaction told me something didn’t fit. He opened the map further.

“I spoke to Tomas yesterday,” Zeron said. “He isn’t missing.” He looked directly at Caius.

For a moment, no one spoke. Halvon had come to Wraithbone using a disappearance that hadn’t happened. Tomas had been alive yesterday, which meant Halvon had lied about the reason for his visit. Now there was no reason to pretend otherwise among ourselves.

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That explained why Halvon knew questions were being asked. Tomas might have told someone Zeron had contacted him. Halvon could have learned about the investigation before coming here, His story had been designed to make his arrival seem reasonable.

“We need Tomas brought somewhere safe,” I said. If Halvon had lied about him disappearing, Tomas could be in danger now. “Before anyone realizes we know he’s alive.” I looked at Zeron.

“I’ll arrange it.” Zeron folded the map again. “But there’s something else.” His attention moved toward the door.

He had learned that Renn and Tomas had exchanged messages recently The last message had been sent two days ago, before Elena arrived at Wraithbone. Zeron hadn’t been able to recover what it said.

A knock interrupted us. The guard Caius had sent to investigate Halvon’s movements entered again. He had already spoken to every wolf who had been near Halvon since his arrival. None of them had mentioned my pregnancy.

“No one told him,” the guard said. “His men didn’t speak to anyone inside before he met with you.”

He looked at Caius.

The answer settled what I’d already suspected. Halvon had known about our baby before he reached Wraithbone. He had lied about Tomas, lied about where he heard about my pregnancy, and arrived while Elena was hidden inside the pack house. Whatever he wanted, it wasn’t a Council meeting.

Then the warning bell rang outside.

Caius turned toward the door as another bell followed. It wasn’t coming from the western gate this time. The sound came from the northern side of Wraithbone.

And Halvon was no longer in his room.

LUCK DRAWY

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 330

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