The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 331

TH

The wolf who knew

The wolf who knew sla)

Caius was out of the room before the second bell ended. Zeron followed him, and I went with them before anyone could tell me to stay behind, Pryor called for the guards stationed near the guest rooms. Halvon had been there only minutes ago.

We reached the northern corridor as two warriors came through the doors ahead. One of them had blood on his sleeve, though the wound beneath it didn't look deep. Caius stopped when he

'saw him. The warrior lowered his head.

"What happened?" Caius asked. "Where is Halvon?" His voice carried through the corridor. Every wolf nearby stopped moving.

The warrior lifted his head again. "We found the northern door open, Alpha King." He glanced toward the doors behind him. "Someone struck me when I went outside to check." His hand remained against his arm.

"Did you see who?" Caius asked. His anger came through our bond again. "Tell me exactly what you saw." He waited for the answer.

"No." The warrior looked frustrated by that. "I heard someone behind me, then I was hit." His eyes moved toward Zeron.

Caius ordered another warrior to take him to Sera. The rest of us continued through the doors and into the northern grounds. Several guards were already searching the area. I couldn't see Halvon anywhere.

Vaela was alert as I looked around. The northern boundary was farther ahead, beyond the trees surrounding this side of the pack house. Halvon couldn't have reached it yet unless he'd left his room before the guard checked on him. That meant we didn't know how much time he'd had. "Split into groups," Caius ordered. "No one leaves Wraithbone." His eyes moved toward Zeron. Zeron immediately sent warriors toward the northern boundary. Two others went around the pack house to check the eastern side. Pryor remained near the entrance with us. I watched the trees.

‘Someone wanted us out here, Vaela said. ‘The bell brought everyone north.‘ Her attention remained on the grounds.

I looked back at the pack house. Guards were still inside, but many had responded to the warning. Elena and Orin were somewhere in there. Then I remembered someone else.

“Caius.” I caught his arm. “What if this isn’t about getting out?” I looked toward the pack house.

The wolf who knew

His eyes followed mine. I thought about everything Halvon already knew and everything we still didn’t understand. The bell had pulled guards toward the northern grounds. That could have been exactly what someone wanted.

“Elena and Orin are inside,” I said. “So is my mother.” My fear came through the bond before I could hide it.

Caius understood immediately. He ordered Pryor to get to Elena and Orin and sent another warrior to find Lyrienne. Pryor didn’t waste time asking questions. He turned and hurried inside.

I knew my mother could protect herself. She had survived far worse than anything happening tonight. That didn’t mean I wanted her alone while someone moved around Wraithbone without our knowledge. I wouldn’t assume anyone was safe until I saw them.

Zeron returned from speaking with the warriors. “No one has crossed the northern/boundary.” He looked toward Caius. “The border guards haven’t seen Halvon or either of his men.” His eyes moved toward me.

“Find his men,” Caius said. “Now.” He looked back toward the pack house. “I want to know where all three of them are.”

Zeron sent two warriors inside. I stayed beside Caius while the remaining guards searched the northern grounds. Nothing about this made sense if Halvon was trying to escape. He had asked to stay here tonight.

A warrior called from near the trees. Caius and I crossed the grounds toward him. Something lay in the grass beside one of the paths. I recognized it when Caius picked it up.

It was the clasp Halvon had been wearing earlier. Caius turned it over in his hand before looking toward the trees. The path continued north from there. It looked like exactly what someone would leave if they wanted us following it.

“Too easy,” I said. “He wants this found.” I looked at Caius.

“I agree.” Caius closed his hand around the clasp. “We go back inside.” He turned toward the warriors.

The northern grounds remained guarded as we returned to the pack house. Zeron met us inside with one of the wolves he’d sent upstairs. Halvon’s two men were still in their rooms. Both claimed they had no idea where Halvon had gone.

“Keep them there,” Caius said. “Separate guards on both doors.” His attention moved toward the corridor.

Pryor appeared before we could continue. Lyrienne was walking beside him, and some of the fear

The wolf who knew left me when I saw her. She came directly toward me. I reached for her hand.

“I’m fine,” she said. “A warrior found me and explained what happened.” Her eyes moved toward

Caius.

“Elena and Orin are safe too,” Pryor said. “No one reached their rooms.” He stopped beside us.

“Did anyone try?” I asked. Elena being safe didn’t mean someorie hadn’t been looking for her. “Did the guards see anyone nearby?” I waited.

“One guard saw a wolf at the end of the corridor shortly before the bell,” Pryor said. “He left before the guard could identify him.” He looked toward Caius.

Someone inside Wraithbone could be helping Halvon. The pregnancy had already told us information was getting out. Now someone had been near Elena’s corridor just before the warning bell. I didn’t believe those things were separate anymore.

“Who knew where Elena was being kept?” I asked. The number should have been small. “Not everyone in the pack house knew she was here.” I looked between them.

Pryor began naming the people who had been involved since Elena arrived. Caius listened without interrupting. Zeron’s expression changed when one name was mentioned. I noticed immediately. “What?” I asked. “You recognized something.” I turned toward him.

“One of the wolves on rotation near this corridor changed his assignment this afternoon,” Zeron said. “He said another warrior asked him to switch.” His eyes went to Caius.

“Who asked him?” Caius said. “Give me the name.” He waited.

Zeron looked at him.

“Kael.”

The name brought the training ground back to me. Kael walking toward us while Caius and I worked on my gifts. Kael watching what I could do.

And Kael hadn’t reported back since the bell rang.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 332

A familiar betrayal

(Isla)

I stared at Zeron as the memory of Kael remained in my mind. I hadn’t thought about him since the day Caius apologized for his reaction on the training ground. Kael had accepted the apology and acted as though nothing had happened. Now he was missing at the exact moment Halvon disappeared.

“Find him,” Caius said. “Search his room and every place he’s assigned to tonight.” His anger reached me through our bond. “Bring him to me alive.”

Zeron left with three warriors while Pryor went to check the names on the rotation list. Lyrienne remained beside me, still holding my hand. She didn’t know Kael, so I explained what had happened on the training ground. Her expression changed when I mentioned that he’d watched me using my gifts.

“Did he ask what you were doing?” Lyrienne asked. “Or anything about your abilities?” Her eyes stayed on me. “Think about everything he said.”

“He asked how long I’d been training.” I remembered him telling me I was a natural. “At the time, it didn’t seem strange.” I looked at Caius.

Caius remembered every part of that meeting too. I could see it in his face as he looked toward the corridor where Zeron had gone. He’d blamed himself for reacting badly when Kael touched me. He’d even gone looking for Kael afterward to apologize.

“I apologized to him,” Caius said. “I thought I’d treated him unfairly.” His hand closed around the clasp Halvon had left outside. “If he’s involved in this, I want to know how long it’s been happening.”

A warrior came through the northern doors and reported that the grounds had been searched again. Halvon hadn't been found, and there was no sign anyone had crossed the boundary. Caius ordered the search to continue inside the pack house. No one was allowed to leave until Halvon and Kael were found.

Pryor returned with the rotation records in his hand. Kael had been assigned near the western training grounds this afternoon. He had no reason to be near Elena's corridor. The change he'd arranged had placed him much closer to her.

"Who approved the switch?" I asked. "Someone should have known he changed positions' I looked at Pryor. "Was there a reason written down?"

"No reason," Pryor said. "The other warrior agreed to it, so the change was record fama benava handed the page to Caius. "Kael made the request himself."

That gave him access to this part of the pack house without drawing attention. He could move through the corridor because everyone would assume he belonged there. If he'd been watching Elena's room, the warning bell could have given him the chance he needed. What I didn't understand was what he'd hoped to find.

"The box," I said. "Renn asked whether Elena brought it." I turned toward Caius. "Maybe Kael was looking for it."

We had moved the records and marker somewhere Halvon couldn't reach them. Kael wouldn't know that unless someone had told him. If Renn had sent him here looking for the case, he might have expected Elena to still have it. That would explain why someone had been near her corridor.

Zeron returned before Caius could answer. He carried a folded piece of paper in one hand. Two warriors followed him, but Kael wasn't with them. I knew from Zeron's face that they hadn't found him.

"His room is empty," Zeron said. "But we found this hidden beneath the bottom drawer." He held the paper out to Caius. "There are dates and names on it."

Caius opened it while I moved beside him. Most of the writing meant nothing to me until I saw one name near the bottom. Renn. It appeared beside three different dates.

"Kael knew Renn," I said. "That can't be a coincidence." I looked at Zeron. "Do any of the dates mean anything?"

"The most recent one was two days ago," Zeron answered. "The same day Renn last exchanged a message with Tomas." His attention moved to the paper. "I'm checking the others now."

Two days ago was before Elena reached Wraithbone. Renn could have contacted Kael after learning she was coming here. If Kael had been giving him information before then, Halvon could have known far more about Wraithbone than we'd realized. That included information about me.

My thoughts went back to Halvon congratulating me. Kael lived here and could see who entered our quarters, who visited Sera, and how Caius behaved around me. But knowing I was pregnant required more than watching from a distance. Someone had either heard something or seen something they weren't meant to.

A door opened farther along the corridor. One of the guards called for Caius, and we all turned toward him. He'd been searching the rooms near the northern entrance. They had found Halvon.

A familiar betrayal

Halvon walked into view between two Wraithbone warriors. He didn't appear injured, and there was no sign he'd been outside. His eyes moved from Caius to me before settling on the clasp in Caius's hand. He stopped several feet away.

"I was wondering where that went," Halvon said. "I heard the warning bell and went to see what happened." His eyes moved toward the warriors around us. "It seems you've been looking for me."

"You weren't near the northern grounds," Caius said. "My warriors searched them." He stepped in front of me without taking his eyes off Halvon. "Where were you?"

Halvon glanced toward the corridor behind him. "I took the wrong passage while trying to reach the northern entrance." He looked back at Caius. "I don't know your pack house well enough to find every exit."

I didn't believe him. Neither did Vaela. Halvon had another excuse ready, just as he'd had one for Tomas and another for knowing about my pregnancy. This time, however, we had something he didn't know we'd found.

Kael's paper was still in Caius's hand. Renn's name was written on it three times. Halvon hadn't noticed it yet. Caius folded the page and passed it to Zeron.

"Take Elder Halvon back to his room," Caius ordered. "Four guards outside the door this time." His eyes remained on Halvon. "He doesn't leave again."

Halvon's gaze moved to me once more before the warriors took him away. I watched until he disappeared around the corner. We still needed proof connecting him to everything we'd found. But Kael had just given us somewhere to start.

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Chapter 333

Before midnight

(Isla)

Caius waited until Halvon was gone before turning to Zeron. The paper from Kael's room had changed what we needed to do next. Finding Kael mattered more than questioning Halvon again. Halvon would only give us another excuse.

"Check every gate and every patrol change from the last hour," Caius ordered. "Kael knows Wraithbone, so don't assume he'll use a normal exit." His eyes moved toward the northern doors. "And don't let Halvon know we're searching for him."

Zeron nodded and left again with the paper. Pryor went with him to compare the dates. against Wraithbone's records. I stayed with Caius and Lyrienne near the corridor. My mother looked toward the direction Halvon had been taken.

"He came here because something changed," Lyrienne said. "People don't take risks like this without a reason." She looked at me. "Whatever he expected to happen tonight didn't."

I thought about Elena arriving with the box. Halvon had somehow known about my pregnancy before coming here, and Renn had been asking about Elena. Kael had changed his assignment to get closer to her room. Too many things had happened within the same few days.

"He might have come for the box," I said. "Or the marker." I remembered the piece of metal Lyrienne had recognized. "Maybe he thought Elena still had them."

Caius called another warrior over and ordered him to check on Elena and Orin again. I didn't argue when he also ordered someone to remain near Lyrienne. Whoever was helping Halvon already knew enough about us. I didn't want anyone left alone tonight.

A warrior came toward us several minutes later. He stopped in front of Caius and reported that one of the storage doors near the eastern grounds had been found unlocked. No one had been assigned inside tonight. One of the guards had noticed it while checking the area. "Take me there," Caius said. "Send word to Zeron." He reached for my hand. "Stay beside me." Lyrienne came with us while two warriors followed. The storage building wasn't far from the pack house, and more guards were already gathering outside. One of them had found clothes behind the building. They belonged to a Wraithbone warrior.

The shirt carried Kael’s scent. He had changed clothes before leaving the area, which meant anyone searching for a Wraithbone warrior might overlook him. There was also an empty bag beside the clothes. I wondered what had been inside it.

Betore matnight

“Search everything,” Caius ordered. “He may have left something here.” His eyes moved around the room. “Bring me anything that doesn’t belong.”

26 Vers

The warriors began checking the shelves and boxes. I stayed near Caius while Lyrienne examined the doorway. There was another exit at the back that opened toward the eastern grounds. Kael could have left without going anywhere near the northern side.

The warning bell had sent most of us north. Halvon’s clasp had given us another reason to keep searching there. Meanwhile, Kael had been moving in the opposite direction. That couldn’t have happened by chance.

Zeron arrived and checked the clothes before speaking with the guards outside. He returned a few minutes later with more information. One of the eastern patrols had seen a man heading toward the training grounds. They hadn’t stopped him because he wasn’t trying to leave Wraithbone.

“He’s still inside the boundary,” Zeron said. “Every gate is covered, and the border guards haven’t seen anyone cross.” He looked toward Caius. “We’ll search the training grounds and work our way back.”

“Do it,” Caius said. “Take enough warriors to cover the entire area.” He looked toward the back exit. “I want him alive.”

Zeron left with several warriors. Caius wanted to join them, but another guard arrived before he could leave. The guard had been checking the path between the storage building and training grounds. He’d found something near the trees.

It was a small piece of paper folded twice. Caius opened it carefully while I stood beside him. There were only four words written inside. They were enough to change his expression.

“What does it say?” I asked. “Is it from Renn?” I looked down at the paper. “Can you tell?” “North gate after midnight,” Caius read. “Nothing else.” He turned the paper over. “No name.” Lyrienne came closer and looked at it. Midnight hadn’t arrived yet. Whoever wrote it had expected someone to reach the northern gate later tonight. The warning bell might have

‘the plan to change.

arn gate looking normal," I said. "If someone is expected there, we "They don't need to know we found this."

Mould remain nearby without ard. If he was

Before midnight

We returned to the pack house with Lyrienne. Caius sent someone to tell Elena and Orin that Kael was still being searched for. Pryor met us near the corridor with the dates he'd been checking. He had found something useful.

"Kael was away from Wraithbone on two of these dates," Pryor said. "Both trips were approved as supply runs." He handed the record to Caius. "He returned the same day each time."

"Where did he go?" I asked. "Were the supply runs west?" I looked at the record. "Someone must know."

"The first was west," Pryor answered. "The second was to an independent settlement near the western boundary." He pointed to the dates. "Both match dates beside Renn's name." Kael hadn't only exchanged messages with Renn. He might have met him outside Wraithbone more than once. That gave Zeron something else to investigate once Kael was caught. It also meant this could have been happening longer than we knew.

A warrior entered before anyone could say more. He was breathing hard from running, and Caius turned toward him. The warrior had come directly from Zeron. They had found Kael.

"He's near the eastern training grounds," the warrior said. "He ran when they called his name." He looked at Caius. "Zeron has him surrounded."

Caius immediately headed for the door. He ordered me to remain with Lyrienne and Pryor this time. I wanted answers as much as he did, but there was no reason for me to run after Kael. They already had him surrounded.

It didn't take long before I felt a change through our bond. Caius's anger remained, but I knew he wasn't injured. I waited near Lyrienne until footsteps approached from the corridor. Zeron entered first.

Kael came behind him with two warriors holding his arms. His hands were restrained behind his back, and dirt covered his clothes. He stopped when he saw me standing beside Lyrienne. Then Caius entered behind him.

No one questioned Kael yet. Caius looked at him before ordering the warriors to take him to -ded room. We would find out what he knew after every exit was secured. Midnight was

Note

The midnight visitor

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 334

The midnight visitor

(Isla)

The guards took Kael away, and Caius waited until the door closed behind them. We still had time before midnight, but not enough to waste. The message near the eastern grounds had given us a chance to see who appeared at the northern gate. Questioning Kael now could warn whoever was waiting for him if he had another way to contact them.

“We wait,” Caius said. “Kael stays under guard until we know who comes to that gate.” He looked at Pryor. “No one speaks to him.”

Pryor left to make sure the order reached the guards. Lyrienne remained with me while Caius sent warriors to check every entrance again. The northern gate had to appear unchanged. Anyone watching from outside couldn’t suspect that we were expecting them.

“Do you think Renn will come?” I asked. “He went north after leaving Wraithbone.” I looked toward the nearest window. “The message could have been meant for him.”

“Maybe,” Caius said. “But we’re not guessing tonight.” He took my hand. “Whoever comes through those trees will give us something.”

We returned to our quarters while we waited. Lyrienne came with us because Caius didn’t want her moving around alone. I was glad she didn’t argue with him. Tonight wasn’t the time for any of us to make things harder.

The waiting bothered me more than searching had. Somewhere else in the pack house, Halvon sat behind a guarded door while Kael did the same. Neither knew we’d found the message. If one of them expected someone after midnight, they had no way of knowing we were waiting too.

A knock came at the door later. Zeron entered and told us the warriors were in position near the northern gate. They were far enough away that someone approaching from outside shouldn’t notice them. No movement had been seen yet.

“How long until midnight?” I asked. I had stopped trying to judge it myself. “Are we close?”

“Less than half an hour,” Zeron said. “I’ll be at the gate.” He looked at Caius. “Raith has taken the eastern side in case someone tries to circle around.”

Caius decided he would go with Zeron. I knew what was coming before he looked at me. This time I didn’t argue about staying inside. Running around Wraithbone while pregnant and exhausted wouldn’t help anyone.

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won opened the clothinside was a scalated envelope and a small keyy Thereevassndondante ritten on the outside of the enveloppe The seal, however wasn't ufani i had seen it on Council documents.

"That's a Council seal," I said. "Why would Renn have that?" I looked at Pryor as he entered behind them.

Pryor examined the seal without opening the envelope. "It belongs to a Council member." His eyes moved to Caius. "Each member has a small difference in the mark."

"Whose?" I asked. My thoughts had already gone to Halvon. "Can you tell?"

"Yes," Pryor said. He placed the envelope back on the table. "This one belongs to Halvon."

The room became quiet. We finally had something Halvon couldn't explain away as easily as a missing man or a wrong corridor. Renn had arrived at Wraithbone carrying an envelope sealed with Halvon's own Council mark. Now we needed to know what was inside.

"Open it," Caius said. "Then bring Renn and Kael to separate rooms nearby." He looked at Zeron. "We're getting answers tonight."

Pryor broke the seal and unfolded the page inside. His eyes moved across the writing before stopping. Then he handed it to Caius.

There was only one sentence.

Get the box before Sorin arrives.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 335

Ivery page led to serin

(Isla)

I read the sentence again over Caius's arm. Sorin wasn't due until tomorrow evening, which meant Halvon believed the box could expose something before then. Renn had been sent here to get it. Kael had been helping him from inside Wraithbone.

“What does Sorin have to do with the box?” I asked. “His narne was beside Halvon’s on that old journey north.” I looked at Pryor. “Halvon knows he’s coming here, doesn’t he?”

“He knows I sent for Sorin,” Caius said. “He doesn’t know why.” He handed the page back to Pryor. “That’s probably what worries him.”

Zeron left to bring Renn into one of the nearby rooms. Kael remained separated from him, and Halvon was still under guard. Caius wanted their answers before any of them knew what the others had said. I went with him when Zeron returned.

Renn sat at a table with his hands restrained. The cut he’d received during his earlier escape had been treated. He looked tired, but his eyes went directly to me when we entered. Zeron closed the door behind

“You came here for Elena’s box,” Caius said. “We found Halyon’s message.” He placed the opened envelope on the table. “Start talking.”

Renn looked at the broken seal. Whatever explanation he’d prepared disappeared when he saw it. His eyes moved toward Zeron before returning to Caius. He seemed to understand that denying everything wouldn’t work anymore.

“I was supposed to collect it,” Renn said. “Nothing more.” He looked down at the table. “Kael was supposed to get it to me.”

“Who gave you the order?” Caius asked. “I want the name.” He didn’t move from where he stood. “Don’t waste my time.”

“Halvon.” Renn finally looked at him. “I’ve carried messages for him before.” His hands moved against the restraints. “This wasn’t the first.”

I thought about all the years Renn had known Elena’s mother. She had trusted him enough to let him bring records to her home. If he’d been working for Halvon then too, he could have been watching her while pretending to help. Elena deserved to know which one it had been.

“Did you tell Halvon what Elena’s mother was doing?” I asked. “You worked with her.” I watched his face. “Were you reporting on her?”

“No.” Renn looked at me. “I helped her because I believed her.” He swallowed before continuing. “Halvon didn’t know about that.”

That answer surprised me. Renn had attacked a man and worked with Kael, but that didn’t mean every part of his past had been a lie. His connection to Elena’s mother could have begun differently. Somewhere along the way, something had changed.

Every packet

Then welry work for Halvon now?" I asked. "You knew what Elena's mother was afraid of." I thought about The note she'd left behind. "You knew she was following someone on the Council."

Renn looked toward the closed door. After she died, i stopped asking questions." He lowered his eyes. "Halvon found me years later and offered work." His voice had changed.

Caius placed the small key from Renn's bundle on the table. We still didn't know what it opened. Renn looked at it and then looked away. That reaction didn't escape any of us.

"What's the key for?" Caius asked. "And don't tell me you don't know." He pushed it across the table. "You carried it here."

"A lockbox outside Wraithbone," Renn said. "North of your boundary." He stared at the key. "I was supposed to put Elena's box inside it."

"Who was collecting it?" Caius asked. "Halvon couldn't leave without being noticed." He waited.

"I don't know." Renn shook his head. "I was told to leave it there and return west." He looked at Caius. "That's all."

Caius sent Zeron to have warriors locate the lockbox without opening it. Renn gave them directions before Zeron left. If someone still planned to collect it, we could watch the area instead of disturbing it. That gave us another chance to catch whoever Halvon was using.

I wanted one more answer before we left Renn. It was the question that had bothered me since Halvon congratulated me. Kael was the only person we had found inside Wraithbone who could have sent information out.

"How did Halvon know I was pregnant?" I asked. "Did Kael tell you?" I watched Renn carefully. "Answer me."

Renn hesitated long enough to make me certain. "Kael sent word yesterday." He looked toward Caius. "I passed it on."

Anger hit me through the bond, but Caius didn't move toward Renn. We finally knew how Halvon had learned. The information had left Wraithbone before he arrived. The guard's search hadn't missed anything.

"What exactly did Kael send?" I asked. "Did he know for certain?" I needed to understand how much he'd heard. "Or was he guessing?"

"He said he'd overheard Sera speaking to another healer outside her rooms," Renn answered. "He heard enough to understand." His eyes dropped again. "He sent the message to me that evening."

That meant Sera hadn’t betrayed us. She might not even have realized anyone was close enough to hear her. Kael had taken something private and sent it beyond our territory. Halvon had then walked into Wraithbone already knowing.

We left Renn under guard and returned to the corridor. Caius ordered Zeron to question Kael next and compare every answer. I wanted to be there when he did. This time Caius didn’t tell me otherwise.

A warrior approached before we reached Kael’s room. He had come from the northern grounds with news about the lockbox. They had found it exactly where Renn said it would be. But it wasn’t empty only patike? TO

Inside were several old Council papers,

And every one of them carried Sorin’s name.

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Chapter 336

wrong elder

(Isla)

I looked at the warrior, unsure whether I’d heard him correctly. Sorin’s name appearing once could have meant almost anything, but several papers made it harder to dismiss. Caius held out his hand for them. The warrior explained that another guard was bringing the lockbox inside.

“How many papers?” Caius asked. “And did you touch anything else?” His attention stayed on the warrior. “I want everything exactly as you found it.”

“Six papers,” the warrior answered. “The box was already locked when we found it.” He handed Caius the papers. “We used Renn’s key.”

Caius passed the first page to Pryor. I moved closer as he began reading. The document was seventeen years old and recorded a Council journey into the north. Halvon and Sorin were both listed.

The next page recorded another journey several days later. Sorin’s name appeared there too, along with Halvon’s. Pryor checked the remaining pages. All six concerned travel into the north.

“These aren’t normal copies,” Pryor said. “Council travel records are kept in the main archive.” He examined the bottom of one page. “Someone removed these.”

“Could Sorin have removed them?” I asked. I didn’t like asking it, but we couldn’t ignore his name. “Would he have had access?” I looked at Pryor.

“Yes,” Pryor answered. “So would Halvon and several other Council members.” He placed the page beside the others. “His name being here doesn’t prove he removed them.”

That mattered. Sorin had treated me fairly when the Council came to Wraithbone, even when doing so meant admitting the Council had failed me. I wasn’t ready to believe he’d been lying through all of it. But I wouldn’t ignore evidence because I wanted him to be innocent.

Lyrienne joined us as the lockbox was carried inside. The wooden box was small enough for one person to carry and looked newer than Elena’s case. Renn’s key remained in the lock. Nothing else was inside

“Why would Halvon want Elena’s box placed in here with these papers?” I asked. “He could have left it empty.” I looked at the six pages again. “He wanted them found together.”

Caius looked at me. The same thought had reached him. If the box had been discovered with records bearing Sorin’s name, suspicion would have fallen on Sorin. Halvon might have been preparing more than a hiding place.

“He’s trying to connect Sorin to it,” I said. “Maybe that’s why he needed the box before Sorin arrived.” I looked toward the corridor leading to Halvon’s room. “He wanted us looking at the wrong Elder.

“We don’t confront him yet,” Caius said. “Not until Sorin gets here.” He gathered the papers. “Halvon thinks his plan is still working.”

Pryor began comparing the six papers to the Council records he already had with him. Several details matched known journeys, including dates and official signatures. Nothing appeared forged. The papers could have been genuine records removed from the archive years ago.

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That only made the question worse. Halvon had somehow gotten them into the lockbox, or someone working for him had. He had choseni papers that tied Sorin to northern travel. I wanted to hear Sorin explain those journeys himself.

A guard came to tell us Kael was ready to be questioned. Caius handed the papers to Pryor and ordered him to keep them secured. Lyrienne decided to remain with Pryor while he checked the records. I followed Caius and Zeron to Kael.

Kael was sitting when we entered. He looked at me briefly before turning his attention to Caius. The confidence I remembered was gone. He knew Renn had been captured.

“Renn talked,” Caius said. “So think carefully before you lie.” He stood across from Kael. “How long have you been giving him information?”

“About eight months,” Kael answered. “It started with small things.” He looked at the table. “Patrol changes, visitors, when ranked wolves left Wraithbone.”

“Why?” I asked. “You were trusted here.” I couldn’t understand risking everything for someone outside our pack. “What did Renn give you?”

“Money,” Kael said. “At the beginning, that was all. His eyes met mine briefly. “Then he started asking for more.”

Caius asked whether Kael knew the information went to Halvon. Kael admitted he learned several months ago, after Renn mentioned that an Elder paid well for useful information. He claimed he hadn’t known why Halvon wanted it. I wasn’t sure how much of that I believed.

“Why did you change your assignment today?” I asked. “You placed yourself near Elena.” I watched him. “What were you supposed to do?”

“Take the wooden case from her room,” Kael answered. “Renn told me where to bring it.” He looked toward Caius. “I never got inside.”

That matched what we’d already found. The bell had been meant to draw guards away while Kael took Elena’s case and carried it toward the eastern grounds. From there, he could change clothes and reach Renn later. Halvon’s clasp had kept attention north.

“Who rang the bell?” Caius asked. “You were on the eastern side. He leaned closer to the table. “Someone else helped you.”

Kael hesitated.

Caius didn’t repeat the question. He simply waited. Kael looked from him to Zeron before lowering his head. When he finally answered, the name wasn’t one I expected.

“Halvon rang it himself,” Kael said. “He told me he’d create the distraction.” He rubbed his restrained hands together. “He said I would have ten minutes.”

That explained why Halvon had disappeared from his room. He hadn’t been lost in the pack house at all. He’d gone far enough to set off the warning, leave his clasp outside, and return through another passage before the search reached him. His mistake had been assuming Kael would get the box.

“Did Halvon tell you why he wanted it?” I asked. “Or why it had to be tonight?” I needed to know whether

Kael had heard Sorin’s name “Think before you answer.”

“Kael looked directly at me.

“He said Sorin couldn’t be allowed to see what was inside.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 337

Running out of time

(Isla)

Clown

I stared at Kael. Whatever was inside Elena’s case had frightened Halvon enough to risk coming into Wraithbone himself. He had known Sorin was coming, and that had changed everything. I wanted to know why.

“What did he think Sorin would find?” I asked. “You must have heard something.” I watched Kael. “He wouldn’t involve you without giving you instructions.”

“He never explained,” Kael said. “He only said the case had to disappear before Sorin arrived.” He looked at Caius. “He told me not to open it.”

Caius moved away from the table. We had gotten what we needed from Kael for now. Keeping him here wouldn’t give us answers he didn’t have. Sorin was the person Halvon feared speaking to.

“Take him back,” Caius ordered. “He remains under guard.” He looked at the warriors near the door. “No visitors.”

The warriors took Kael away while Zeron remained with us. Caius told him to make sure Renn was guarded separately. Neither man would be allowed to speak with Halvon. By morning, Haivon would realize his plan had failed anyway.

We returned to the room where Pryor and Lyrienne were waiting. Elena and Orin had joined them while we were gone. The six Council papers were spread across the table. Pryor had arranged them by date.

“Kael confirmed Halvon wanted Elena’s case before Sørin arrived,” I said. “He doesn’t know why.” I looked toward Elena. “Whatever your mother left behind matters to him.”

Elena moved closer to the table. The case itself was still hidden elsewhere, exactly where Caius had ordered it kept. She looked at the papers instead. One date caught her attention.

“My mother was north during this one,” Elena said. “I remember this date from her notes.” She pointed at one of the pages. “She followed someone there.”

Pryor checked the notes we’d already taken from Elena’s mother’s records. The dates matched. Her mother had traveled north only days after Halvon and Sorin were recorded there. That placed all three in the same area seventeen years ago.

“She could have followed Halvon after this journey,” I said. “That’s what we already suspected.” I looked at the other pages. “But Sorin was there too.”

Orin picked up the earliest document. He read through it before placing it back down. His attention remained on the names at the bottom. Something about them seemed to bother him.

“These journeys happened near the time someone began searching for Keeper records,” Orin said. “I told you Elena’s mother was looking for me then.” He tapped the page. “Now we know what she may have been following.”

Lyrienne came to stand beside me. We knew Elena’s mother had been frightened when she returned home. She’d hidden the marker and case afterward. Whatever she saw in the north had convinced her she

Runtung caoftmc was in danger.

“I looked at Elena. “Did your mother ever mention Sorin?” I asked. “Even once?” I waited.

“No,” Elena answered. “I remember Halvon because he came to our home.” She shook her head. “I don’t remember Sorin’s name at all.”

That made me question why Sorin appeared on every paper Halvon had hidden. If Elena’s mother believed Sorin was dangerous too, I thought she would have left something about him. Instead, everything we’d found from her pointed toward Halvon. The papers felt more like protection for Halvon than evidence against Sorin.

Caius seemed to reach the same conclusion. He asked Pryor whether the records showed who had ordered the northern journeys. Pryor checked each page again. Four had been requested by Halvon.

“And the other two?” Caius asked. “Who requested those?” He stood beside Pryor. “Check the signatures.”

“Sorin,” Pryor answered. “But both were filed after Halvon’s first journey.” He pointed to the dates. “Sorin may have been following him.”

That possibility fit what we already knew much better. Halvon had gone north, and Sorin might have become suspicious enough to follow. Elena’s mother could have done the same. Seventeen years later, Halvon was trying to make those journeys look like something else.

“We wait for Sorin,” Caius said. “No one tells Halvon what we’ve found.” He gathered the pages. “Tomorrow he explains every journey himself.”

It was late enough that exhaustion was catching up with me. Lyrienne noticed before I said anything. She reminded me that Sera had already told me to rest when I needed it. I didn’t argue this time.

Caius sent Elena and Orin back with guards while Pryor took the papers somewhere secure. Zeron remained responsible for Renn and Kael. Halvon’s room had four guards outside it. There was nothing else we could learn tonight without Sorin.

Caius and I returned to our quarters with Lyrienne walking with us until we reached her room. She hugged me before going inside. I promised I would actually sleep instead of lying awake thinking about Halyon. Caius gave me a look that suggested he doubted that promise

When we were alone, I sat on the bed while Caius removed his shirt. Tomorrow evening suddenly felt far away. Halvon had spent years hiding something connected to the north. Sorin might finally tell us what it was.

“He knows we’re getting close,” I said. “That’s why he’s taking risks now.” I looked at Caius. “I’m worried about what he’ll do when Sorin gets here.”

“He won’t get near Sorin without guards around him,” Caius said. “And he won’t get near you.” He came closer. “Tomorrow we get the truth.”

I wanted to believe that would be enough. Halvon was trapped inside Wraithbone with Renn and Kael already talking. His plan to take Elena’s case had failed. He had fewer places left to hide.

Vaela remained uneasy despite everything we’d learned. I could feel her attention somewhere beyond our room. She wasn’t thinking about the papers or the case anymore. She was thinking about Halvon.

Running duroftime-

He knows he’s running out of time, she said.

And so did I.

Commen

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 338

The missing entry

(Isla)

I woke later than I normally did. Caius was already awake beside me, though he hadn't left the bed. One of his hands rested near mine while he stared toward the window. I wondered how long he'd been awake.

"Did you sleep?" I asked. "Or did you spend the whole night thinking?" ! turned toward him. "You look like you didn't sleep."

"I slept," Caius said. "Just not enough." He took my hand. "How do you feel?"

"Tired and hungry." I sat up and looked at him. "Mostly hungry." I was beginning to understand why Sera kept telling me to eat whenever my body asked for food.

Caius got dressed while I did the same. There had been no trouble during the remaining hours of the night. Halvon, Renn, and Kael were still under guard. Sorin was expected by evening.

We found Lyrienne eating when we joined her. Sera was there too, and she looked at me the moment I entered. I knew that look by now. She was checking whether I'd listened to her.

"I slept," I said. "And I'm about to eat." I sat beside my mother. "You don't have to ask."

"Good." Sera pushed a plate closer to me. "Then I won't." She smiled.

Caius sat across from us as Zeron entered. He had spent part of the morning checking the rest of Kael's movements from the past eight months. Several of his supply trips matched times Renn had been in nearby territories. The connection between them was no longer in question.

"Anything from Halvon?" Caius asked. "Has he tried speaking to his men?" He looked at Zeron. "Or anyone else?"

“No.” Zeron remained near the table. “He asked why he’s being kept in his room.” He glanced at me. “I told the guards not to answer.”

Halvon knew something had gone wrong. Kael hadn’t delivered Elena’s case, and Renn hadn’t returned with it. By now he had to suspect both men had been caught. Yet he couldn’t know what either had told us.

Pryor arrived carrying one of the six Council papers. He had spent the morning comparing them with copies still held in Council records. Five matched exactly. The sixth had something different.

“This line isn’t on the archive copy,” Pryor said. “Someone removed it before the copy was filed.” He placed the page in front of Caius. “Read the final entry.”

I leaned closer. The added entry recorded that Halvon had left the group during one of the northern journeys. He had been gone for several hours. Sorin had reported it when Halvon returned.

“That’s why Halvon kept this copy,” I said. “The Council version doesn’t show he disappeared.” I looked at Pryor. “Someone changed the record.”

“Yes.” Pryor pointed at the entry. “The original remained outside the archive.” He looked toward Caius. “This is the only version we’ve found with Sorin’s report still included.”

The missing fity

That explained why Halvon wanted theac papers hidden with Elena’s case. If we found them without knowing which version was real, Sorin’s name would triake him look involved. But this page showed something else. Sorin had questioned Halvon seventeen years ago.

“What reason did Halven give for leaving?” I asked. “Does it say?” I searched the rest of the page. “There must have been an explanation.”

“No reason is recorded here,” Pryor said. “Only that Sorin requested an explanation.” He picked up the paper. “Whatever Halvon said wasn’t written down.”

Caius looked toward Zeron. He ordered him to make sure Sorin was met before he reached the main entrance. Halvon couldn’t be allowed to see or speak with him before we did. Zeron left immediately.

The rest of the day passed without another problem. I spent some of it with Lyrienne while Caius worked with Pryor. Elena remained guarded with Orin, but she knew Sorin was coming. Everyone seemed to be waiting for evening.

Near sunset, I felt Caius's attention change through our bond. I found him near the main corridor with Pryor. Zeron had sent word from the boundary. Sorin had arrived.

I stayed beside Caius as we waited. Lyrienne joined us a few minutes later. Sorin entered with Zeron and two Council guards who had traveled with him. He looked tired from the journey.

"Alpha King Caius," Sorin said. "Your message gave me very little information." His eyes moved to me. "I assume that was intentional."

"It was," Caius said. "I needed you here before I explained." He gestured toward the room beside us. "There are things you need to see."

Sorin followed us inside. Pryor placed the six Council papers on the table. Sorin stopped when he saw them. He recognized them before touching a single/page.

"Where did you get these?" Sorin asked. He picked up the page containing the missing entry. "These records should have been destroyed."

"Why?" I asked. "And why is your report missing from the Council copy?" I watched him. "What happened seventeen years ago?"

Sorin lowered the page. His eyes went to Caius before returning to me. Whatever he remembered hadn't been forgotten. He pulled out a chair and sat.

"Halvon asked me to travel north with him," Sorin said. "He claimed wolves had been crossing an unclaimed boundary." He looked at the papers. "I believed him."

I moved closer to the table, Halvon had been the reason Sorin went north. That answered one question.

But Sorin wasn't finished.

"On the second night, Halvon disappeared from our camp," Sorin said. "He was gone for several hours." His expression changed. "When he returned, there was blood on his clothes."

Caius looked at him. "Whose blood?" His voice filled the room. "What did he tell you?"

Sorin looked toward the closed door.

The reported

The report they

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 339

The report they buried

(Isia)

Cin

I watched Sorin, waiting for more. A rogue could have explained the blood if Halvon had been telling the truth. But after everything we'd uncovered, I doubted that explanation. Sorin clearly hadn't believed it either.

"Did you see the body?" I asked. "Did Halvon take you to where it happened?" I kept my eyes on Sorin. "There should have been something left behind."

"No." Sorin placed the paper on the table. "I asked him to show me where he'd found the rogue, but he refused. His mouth turned down. "He said he'd already disposed of the body."

Caius glanced at Pryor. There was no report of a rogue being killed during that journey in the records we'd seen. Halvon had disappeared for hours, returned covered in blood, then kept the details out of the official account. Someone had later removed Sorin's concerns as well.

"What happened after that? Caius asked. "You clearly suspected him." He stood across from Sorin. "Why didn't you take it further?"

"I did." Sorin looked at him. "When we returned, I filed a separate report asking for an investigation." He pointed at the papers. "Three days later, I was told the matter had been reviewed and closed."

Pryor immediately asked who had closed it. Sorin thought about the question before giving him the name of a former Council official Pryor knew the man and said he'd died nine years ago. That meant we couldn't question him.

Sorin explained that he'd continued looking into the journey himself. He found no record of a rogue entering the area during that period He also learned Halvon had asked questions about old northern boundaries months before inviting him along. By then, Sorin knew the journey hadn't been about rogues.

"Why did you go north again?" I asked. "Two of these journeys were requested by you." I touched the papers. "What were you trying to find?"

“Where Halvon went that night,” Sorin answered. “I returned twice without telling him.” He looked at me. “The second time, I found something.”

Everyone waited for him to continue. Sorin said he’d followed the route beyond their old camp and found signs that someone had been using an abandoned path. It led deeper north toward land that didn’t appear on the maps he’d been given. He had followed it until he reached a stone marker.

“What was on it?” Lyrienne asked. “Did you recognize the mark?” She had been listening without interrupting. “Tell me what you saw.”

“A circle surrounding three lines,” Sorin said. “There was another mark through the center. He looked at Lyrienne when her face changed. “I didn’t know what it meant then.

it was the Keeper symbol. Orin had shown us the same mark, and we’d found it connected to records Varen had tried to control. Halvon had been near a protected Keeper route seventeen years ago. Elena’s mother had followed him north soon afterward.

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Chan

“Did you go beyond the marker?” I asked. “What was there?” I could already guess why Halvon wouldn’t want Sarin talking about it. “Did you find anyone?”

“No.” Sorin shook his head. “Someone had removed every sign of where the path continued.” He looked toward the papers. “But knew Halvon had lied.”

Sorin returned to the Council and tried again to have the matter investigated. This time, the original report from the journey couldn’t be found. The sopy in the archive no longer included his note about Halvon disappearing. Someone had begun removing anything that could lead back to that night.

That was when Sorin stopped putting his questions into Council records. He kept his own notes and watched Halvon instead. Nothing happened that gave him enough proof to accuse another Elder. Years passed, but he never forgot the journey.

“Why were these papers supposed to be destroyed? Caius asked. “You said that when you saw them.” He picked up the altered record. “Who ordered it?

“Halvon did,” Sorin answered. “He told the Council they contained errors and replacement copies had already been filed.” He looked at Pryor. “I objected, but I was told the originals were destroyed.”

They hadn’t been destroyed at all. Halvon had kept them somewhere for seventeen years, and now they had appeared inside a lockbox he planned to use for Elena’s case. He had

preserved the very papers that could hurt him. I wondered why until I looked at Sorin's name across every page.

"He kept them in case he ever needed someone else blamed," I said. "If questions came back, he could use you." I looked at Sorin "And now they have

Sorin's face showed no surprise. He had probably reached the same answer years ago. Halvon had kept evidence that could be turned against Sorin if anyone discovered what happened in the north. Elena's case threatened to change that

Caius told Sorin about Elena and her mother's investigation. He explained that her mother had followed someone north seventeen years ago and returned frightened. He also told him Halvon had come to her home. Sorin listened without interrupting

"Her mother may have seen what I couldn't find." Sorin said. "If she followed Halvon after I left, she may have learned where that path went." He looked at me. "That could be what he fears."

I thought about Elena's case and everything her mother had protected until her death. Halvon had tried to take it before Sorin arrived because he feared what their separate pieces might reveal together. Now Sorin was here, and the case was safe. Halvon had failed at both.

Calus turned toward Zeron. "Bring Elena and Orin here." He looked at Pryor next. "Bring the case too."

Zeron left immediately.

Sorin looked at Calus. "Where is Halvon now?" He pushed his chair back. "Does he know I've arrived?"

"He's under guard," Caius answered. "And he isn't leaving that room. His eyes went toward the door "Not until we're ready for him."

Vaela's warning returned to me. Halvon knew he was running out of time, and now Sorin had arrived anyway Whatever Halvon had been trying to stop was about to happen. I only hoped we reached the truth

The report the f before !ic made another move.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 340

The empty room

(Isla)

Zeron returned with Elena and Orin several minutes later. Pryor came behind them carrying the wooden case, then placed it on the table between us. Sorin stared at the mark carved into it. I saw recognition come over his face.

“You’ve seen that before,” I said. “Not the Keeper symbol on the marker, but this one.” I pointed toward the case. “Where?”

“Near the path I found seventeen years ago,” Sorin answered. “It was carved into a tree close to the stone marker.” He looked at Elena. “I never learned what it meant.”

Elena told him it belonged to Mara’s Keeper line. Her mother had given her the case after returning from her own northern journey. Sorin listened while she explained what little her mother had told her. Then Pryor brought out the pages we’d already found inside.

Sorin read Mara’s warning about the family that had served Varen. He then reached the part added by Elena’s mother years later. Halvon’s name was there. Sorin stopped reading.

“She knew,” Sorin said. “Your mother knew Halvon was connected to that family.” He looked at Elena. “That must be why he came to your home.”

“My mother never told me what they discussed,” Elena said. “She sent me away when he arrived.” Her fingers rested against the table. “But she was angry after he left.”

Orin took the pages from Sorin and studied the later notes. We had read them before, but now Sorin’s account gave them more meaning. Elena’s mother hadn’t simply been tracing old Keeper families. She had been watching Halvon himself.

“There’s something we haven’t considered,” I said. “The blood.” Everyone looked at me. “Elena’s mother followed Halvon only days later, but who did Halvon meet that night?”

Sorin didn’t know. He had never found a body or proof that anyone had died. The blood could have belonged to someone Halvon injured instead. Seventeen years had passed without an answer.

Elena reached for another page from her mother’s case. She read through the notes before stopping near the bottom. There was a short entry we’d seen before but hadn’t been able to connect to anything. This time, Sorin was there to hear it.

“My mother wrote that she found signs of a struggle near the northern path,” Elena said. “She didn’t give a name.” Her eyes moved across the words. “She wrote that someone had been taken away”

Sorin stood. He asked Elena to show him the entry, then read it himself. His face changed as he reached the final words. He turned toward Caius.

“That wasn’t in anything I found,” Sorin said. “If someone was taken, Halvon lied about killing a rogue.” He returned the page to Elena. “There may never have been a rogue.”

The room became quiet while I thought about what that meant. Halvon could have attacked someone near the Keeper path and removed them before returning to camp. Elena’s mother arrived days later and found what remained. Whatever she learned afterward had frightened her enough to hide everything.

Orin asked to see the note. Elena handed it to him, and he read it twice. Then he looked toward the metal marker we’d kept with the other evidence. I remembered that Vaela had sensed a memory within it.

“I know where she may have found this now,” Orin said. “Not simply near the northern boundary.” He pointed to the note. “She found it where the struggle happened.”

I looked at the marker. Vaela had wanted to reach into the memory it carried, but Sera had warned me against using that gift while pregnant. I wasn’t changing that decision. There had to be another way to learn what happened.

“Can the marker tell us anything without Vaela using her gift?” I asked. “Anything you recognize?” I looked at Orin. “We need another way.”

“Perhaps.” Orin picked it up carefully, “These weren’t all identical.” He turned it over. “Some were made for specific protected entrances.”

Lyrienne moved beside him and examined the mark on the back. She had recognized it earlier as something used near Silvermere. This time Sorin described exactly where he’d found the stone marker during his journey. Lyrienne listened closely.

“I know that route,” Lyrienne said. “It didn’t lead directly into Silvermere.” She looked at Orin. “It led to one of the places used to shelter people before they were brought farther north.”

That changed everything. Halvon hadn’t simply wandered near an old Keeper path seventeen years ago. He had gone near a place once used to protect people connected to the old order. Someone had been there when he arrived.

“Could anyone still have been using it seventeen years ago?” Caius asked. “After everything that happened?” His attention stayed on Orin. “Think carefully.”

“Yes, Orin answered. “Not as it was originally intended.” He set the marker down. “But

25 Points someone searching for old Keeper records could have used it.”

Elena’s mother had been searching for Orin during that same period. Someone else had apparently been searching too. Halvon had gone north, disappeared from Sorin’s camp, and returned with blood on his clothes. Days later, Elena’s mother found signs that someone had been taken.

A knock came at the door before anyone could continue. Zeron opened it and spoke quietly with the warrior outside. His expression changed before he turned back toward us. Caius immediately noticed.

“What happened?” Caius asked. “Is it Halvon?” He moved toward Zeron. “Tell me.”

“One of Halvon’s guards is unconscious,” Zeron said. “Another is missing.” He looked directly at Caius. “Halvon’s room is empty.”

My heart began racing. Four guards had been outside that room, and Halvon shouldn’t have been able to leave without being seen. Yet somehow he’d done exactly what Vaela feared. He had made his move.

Caius ordered every exit sealed. Zeron ran from the room while Pryor called for the warriors in the corridor. Lyrienne came closer to me, and Elena stayed beside Orin. Caius reached for my hand.

Then the warning bell rang.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 341

The vision

The vision

(Isla)

The bell sounded again before Caius reached the door. Warriors were already running through the corridor, calling to one another as every entrance was closed. Caius kept hold of my hand as we moved out of the room. Sorin and Pryor followed behind us.

“Stay with me,” Caius said. “Until we know where Halvon is.” He looked toward Zeron as he returned from the other end of the corridor. “Which gate?”

“Western,” Zeron answered. “Someone tried to open it from inside.” He stopped in front of Caius. “The guards stopped them before it opened.”

My thoughts went immediately to Halvon's two men. They had remained under watch since Halvon was confined. If one of them had tried reaching the gate, the other could be somewhere else. Halvon had planned this before Sorin arrived.

"His men?" I asked. "Where are they?" I looked toward Zeron. "Both of them."

"One is still in his room," Zeron said. "The other is the wolf caught at the western gate." He glanced behind him. "He's already restrained."

That left Halvon and the missing guard. Caius ordered a search of every room and passage before anyone went outside. If Halvon was still inside the pack house, closing the gates had trapped him with us. I wasn't sure whether that made me feel better.

Lyrienne came from the room with Elena and Orin. Caius immediately sent warriors to remain with them. Sorin refused to leave, saying Halvon's actions involved the Council and he intended to see this through. Caius didn't argue with him.

A warrior came running from the direction of Halvon's room. The missing guard had been found inside a storage room nearby. He was alive, but someone had struck him and taken his clothes. Halvon had found himself a way to move through Wraithbone without being noticed.

"Tell every warrior to check faces, not clothing," Caius ordered. "No one moves alone." He looked at Zeron. "Find him."

Zeron left with several warriors. I stayed beside Caius as we headed toward the main section of the pack house. Vorak was close through the bond, and Vaela was watching everything around us. Halvon could be wearing Wraithbone clothing now.

'He won't run yet,' Vaela said. 'He wants something!'

I agreed with her. Halvon had already lost his chance to take Elena's case quietly. Running would only confirm everything we suspected. If he'd risked escaping his room now, there had to be another reason.

"The case," I said. "He might still be trying to get it." I looked at Caius. "Or the papers."

"They're guarded," Caius said. "And he doesn't know where either was moved." He kept walking. "He won't get them."

A shout came from farther ahead. Two warriors ran toward the eastern corridor, and Caius followed. I stayed with him while Sorin and Pryor came behind us. We found one of the guards on the floor near a side room.

He was awake and trying to sit up. Another warrior helped him while Caius asked what happened. The guard said someone wearing Wraithbone clothing had approached from behind. He hadn't realized it was Halvon until Halvon was already close.

"Which way did he go?" Caius asked. "How long ago?" He looked toward both ends of the corridor. "Tell me."

"Toward the old meeting rooms," the guard answered. "Less than two minutes." He held a hand against his head. "He was carrying something."

Caius sent two warriors ahead while we followed. I could feel his anger through our bond, but there was something else beneath it. Halvon wasn't simply trying to escape. Every move seemed to be taking him deeper inside Wraithbone.

The visions

We reached the old meeting rooms and found one door open. The room was empty, but a cabinet had been forced open. Pryor checked it and immediately turned toward Caius. Old territorial maps had been stored there.

"One is missing," Pryor said. "The northern territory map." He checked the remaining papers. "The one showing the old boundary."

Halvon wanted the north. Maybe he intended to destroy the map or use it to reach whatever Sorin had found seventeen years ago. Either way, he was gathering things connected to the same place. Caius ordered the northern exits doubled.

A sound came from the corridor behind us. I turned and saw a Wraithbone warrior approaching. Something about the way he kept his face lowered bothered me. Vaela reacted before I understood why.

'Halvon.

"Caius," I said.

Caius turned immediately. The man stopped. Then he reached beneath the borrowed shirt.

Everything happened at once. Caius pushed me behind him while Sorin shouted for the guards. Halvon pulled a knife and moved toward us. Warriors rushed from both ends of the corridor.

"Stop!" Caius ordered. "Drop the knife." He placed himself between Halvon and me. "There's nowhere left to go."

Halvon looked at Sorin. Whatever he saw there seemed to settle something for him. He didn't drop the knife. Instead, he smiled.

“You should have stayed away,” Halvon said. “You should have left the north buried.” His eyes moved to me. “All of you should have.”

Two warriors moved closer. Halvon glanced toward them, then back at Caius. I expected him to surrender when he realized he was surrounded. Instead, he stepped forward.

Caius met him before he could reach anyone else. Halvon swung the knife, but

The vision

Caius caught his wrist and drove him back against the wall. The knife fell from

Halvon’s hand and hit the floor. A warrior kicked it away.

For one second, I thought it was over. Then Halvon reached beneath his clothes with his free hand. He pulled out a second knife. Caius turned too late.

The blade went into Caius’s side.

And I knew.

This was the vision.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 342

The wolfsbane blade

The world around me seemed to disappear when Calus stumbled back. Halvon released the knife and tried to move away, but two warriors grabbed him before he got far Caius pressed one hand against his side as blood spread across his shirt. I was beside him before anyone could stop me

“Caius,“I caught his arm as his legs gave way. “Look at me.” I lowered with him to the floor. “I’m right here.”

His eyes found mine. He tried to tell me he was alright, but I could see that he wasn’t. A knife wound shouldn’t have affected him this badly. His body should already have been repairing the damage.

‘Something is wrong, Vaela said. ‘Vorak is fading.

Fear went through me. I reached through the mate bond and searched for Vorak, but his presence was weaker than it should have been. Caius's breathing changed. His hand slipped away from the wound.

"Sera!" I shouted. "Someone get Sera now!" I pressed my hands against the wound. "Caius, stay with me."

"I'm here," Caius said. "Isla, I'm here." His eyes closed for a moment before opening again. "Don't be afraid."

wanted to scream at him for saying that. Blood covered my hands, and I could barely feel Vorak through our bond. This was exactly what I'd seen in the vision, except the vision had ended before showing me what happened afterward. I had never known whether Caius survived.

Halvon struggled against the warriors holding him. Zeron arrived and forced him to the floor. Sorin picked up the second knife using a piece of cloth. He examined the blade without touching it.

"There's something on this," Sorin said. "Don't let anyone touch the blade." He looked toward Caius. "It isn't only the wound."

Sera came running with two healers. Lyrienne was behind them, but stopped when she saw me beside Caius. Sera dropped to the floor and immediately moved my hands aside enough to

Har face told me she understood what was happening.

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Hi Hewaynaveaving me.

AZANTES DE CONE the wound finally began to change was small, but sawaw normally would.

The poison is still in him," Sera said. "His body is breaking it down, but it'll take time." She checked his breathing again. "He needs to remain here tonight."

"He's going to live?" I asked. "Tell me the truth." I couldn't accept anything less. "Is he going to survive this?"

"Yes," Sera said. "The amount was dangerous, but Halvon underestimated him." She looked at Caius. "An ordinary wolf might not have survived it."

My legs finally felt weak. I sat beside Caius and kept his hand in mine. Lyrienne entered after Sem allowed her inside. She came directly to me.

I looked down at Caius. The vision had happened, but it hadn't shown me his death, I understood that now. Seeing something terrible didn't mean I had seen the ending.

Zeron appeared at the doorway. Halvon was secured, and the knife had been taken somewhere safe. He wanted to know whether Caius had given any orders before losing consciousness. I looked at the man I loved.

"Keep Halvon alive," I said. "Caius will want answers." I looked at Zeron. "And so do I."

Zeron nodded and left.

I turned back to Caius. His breathing was easier now, and Vorak was still there through the bond. Halvon had tried to kill the Alpha King. He had failed.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 343

Still fighting

Still fighting

(Isla)

I stayed beside Caius while Sera checked him again. His wound had begun closing, but the process was taking much longer than it should. Every few minutes I reached through our bond to make sure Vorak was still there. Each time, I found him.

Lyrienne pulled a chair beside mine. She didn't tell me everything would be fine or ask me to leave Caius and rest. She simply stayed with me. I was grateful for that.

"How long before the wolfsbane leaves his body?" I asked. "Will he be like this all night?" I looked at Sera. "His healing is still not normal."

"Several hours at least," Sera answered. "His body is doing most of the work now." She checked the wound again. "The worst part should be over."

I looked at Caius's face. He hadn't woken again since asking about the baby. His first thought had been whether we were safe. Even half conscious, he'd been worried about us instead of himself.

A knock came at the door. Zeron entered after Sera allowed him inside. There was blood on his sleeve, but it wasn't his. I knew he'd been dealing with Halvon and the men who had helped him.

"Halvon is secured," Zeron said. "Six warriors are guarding him now." He looked toward Caius,

"His two men are also confined separately."

"Did you find out how he got the wolfsbane?" I asked. "He couldn't have carried that knife openly when he arrived." I remembered the searches after his arrival. "Someone must have helped him."

“We found something in the room where his second man was staying,” Zeron answered. “A small container hidden inside the lining of his travel bag.” His expression hardened. “There was wolfsbane residue inside.”

Halvon had brought it into Wraithbone with him. He hadn’t decided to kill Caius after Sorin arrived. The means had already been here. That thought made me look at Caius again.

“He came prepared to use it,” I said. “Maybe not on Caius at the beginning.” I looked at Zeron. “But he expected to need it.”

Zeron agreed. He had already ordered both of Halvon’s men questioned about the container. One refused to speak. The other claimed he hadn’t known what was inside the bag.

Stiff fighting

Sorin appeared at the doorway after Zeron left. He didn’t enter until I told him he could. His clothes still carried a small amount of Caius’s blood from when he’d been near us in the corridor. His face looked different from earlier.

“I should have stopped Halvon years ago,” Sorin said. “I knew he was hiding something.” He looked toward Caius. “I didn’t have enough proof, but I should have done more.”

“You tried,” I said. “Someone removed your report and closed the investigation.” I wasn’t going to place Halvon’s choices on Sorin. “The person responsible is under guard.”

Sorin nodded, though I could tell he still blamed himself. He told me Pryor had gone through the records again while we were with Caius. Something in Elena’s mother’s notes now made sense after Sorin described the old northern shelter. They wanted me to see it when Caius was awake.

“Then it waits,” I said. “I’m not continuing this without him.” I looked at Caius. “We’ve waited seventeen years for those answers.”

Sorin accepted that and left. Lyrienne remained while Sera finally convinced me to eat something. One of the healers brought food into the room so I didn’t have to leave. I ate because I knew Caius would be angry if I didn’t.

Hours passed before his fingers moved against mine. I looked up immediately. Caius opened his eyes and stared at the ceiling before turning his head toward me. Relief rushed through

“You’re awake,” I said. “Don’t try to get up.” I leaned closer. “Sera will probably tie you to the bed if you do.”

“I’d like to see her try,” Caius said. “How long was I out?” His voice was stronger than before.

“Where’s Halvon?”

“Still alive,” I answered. “Because I told Zeron to keep him that way.” I watched his face. “We need answers before you decide what happens to him.”

Caius looked at me for a moment. He understood exactly why I’d made that decision. Halvon knew more about the north than he’d ever admitted. Killing him before we had the truth would only bury those answers with him.

“And you?” Caius asked. “Have you rested?” His eyes moved toward Lyrienne. “Has she rested?”

“Enough,” I said. “And before you ask again, the baby is fine.” I brought his hand closer to me.

“You scared me.”

Still fighting

“I’m sorry.” Caius looked at me. “I didn’t see the second knife.” His eyes changed when he remembered. “You said something before I lost consciousness.”

I knew what he meant. I had told him nothing about the vision while Sera was trying to save him. But he’d seen my face after the knife entered him. Maybe he’d felt what happened through our bond.

“It was the vision,” I said. “The one I saw before.” I kept hold of his hand. “Halvon stabbing you was what Vaela showed me.”

Caius was quiet. He knew how long that vision had frightened me. I had wondered when it would happen and whether I could prevent it. Now it was behind us.

“The vision didn’t show me this,” I said. “It didn’t show you waking up.” I looked into his eyes. “I spent all that time afraid because I didn’t know what came next.”

“I’m still here,” Caius said. “And I’m not going anywhere.” His fingers closed around mine. “Halvon failed.”

Vaela heard him through me. Vorak answered from somewhere inside Caius, stronger than he had been earlier. Their connection wasn’t fully back, but it was returning. I finally allowed myself to believe the danger had passed.

Caius looked toward the door. He wasn't ready to leave Sera's care, but I knew what he was thinking. Halvon was alive because we needed the truth. Once we had it, Caius would decide his fate.

And Halvon would answer for everything.

Sall fighting

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 344

The blood on his clothes

The blood on his clothes

(Caius)

Sera refused to let me leave. I argued until Isla gave me a look that told me I wasn't going to win. The wolfsbane was still working its way out of my body, and even Vorak agreed that I needed time. I hated that they were both right.

'You nearly died, Vorak said.

"I didn't," I answered under my breath.

Isla looked at me from her chair.

"What did he say?"

"Nothing useful," I said. "He's agreeing with Sera."

Isla smiled, and seeing it after everything that had happened was enough to stop me from arguing. She had been afraid when I woke, even if she'd tried not to show it. I could feel what remained of that fear through our bond. Halvon had caused enough pain for one night.

By morning, the wound had closed completely. I could still feel where the knife had entered, and Vorak wasn't back to his full strength. Sera checked me twice before finally allowing me to stand. She warned me that being able to walk didn't mean I could return to training.

"I need to question Halvon," I said.

“You need to eat,” Sera answered. “Then you can decide what you’re capable of doing.” She pointed toward the food waiting for me. “I’m not arguing about this.”

I looked at Isla, expecting support. She picked up the plate and handed it to me instead. Lyrienne laughed from across the room. I accepted that I had been outnumbered.

An hour later, Pryor arrived carrying Elena’s mother’s notes. Sorin came with him, and Orin followed a few minutes later. Elena remained with Lyrienne while we gathered around the table. Isla sat beside me.

“We found the part I mentioned yesterday,” Sorin said. “I remembered the area after reading it again.” He placed one finger beside a passage. “This happened days after Halvon returned from the north.”

Pryor turned the page toward us. Elena’s mother had written about following the old path beyond the northern boundary. She found disturbed ground near the shelter Lyrienne had identified. There had been blood there.

The blood on his clothes

“She believed someone had been taken away,” Pryor said. “She found marks where something had been dragged toward the trees.” He indicated another section. “Then she found the metal marker.”

Orin took the page and read it himself. His expression changed when he reached the final lines. He looked toward Lyrienne before placing the paper down. Something there meant more to him than it did to me.

“I know who she was looking for,” Orin said. “She wasn’t searching the north without a reason.” He looked at Isla. “She was searching for a Keeper.”

Isla leaned forward.

“Who?”

“Maelor’s daughter,” Orin answered. “Her name was Selia Serath.” He rested his hands on the table. “She survived after Maelor died.”

I remembered Maelor’s book in Darius’s chest. He had helped prepare the chamber where Isla was placed in protected sleep. Nothing we’d found had mentioned a daughter. Orin explained that had been intentional.

Selia had continued her father’s work without using his name. She carried records between old Keeper shelters and kept track of families once connected to Varen. Seventeen years ago, she sent word that someone on the Council had begun searching for those records. The message never reached Orin.

“Halvon found her,” Isla said.

“I believe he did,” Orin answered. “And Elena’s mother followed him.” His eyes went to Sorin. “That would explain the blood you saw on him.”

Sorin stood without speaking for several seconds. Seventeen years ago, Halvon had disappeared from their camp and returned claiming he’d killed a rogue. There had been no rogue. There had been a Keeper.

“Was Selia killed?” Sorin asked.

“I don’t know,” Orin answered. “I never heard from her again.” He looked down at the page.

“But if Elena’s mother wrote that someone was taken away, Halvon may not have killed her there.”

That answer would have to come from Halvon. I stood, ignoring the look Sera gave me from across the room. Isla stood beside me before anyone could tell her to remain behind. I had no intention of asking her to.

The blood on his clothes

Zeron met us outside the room. Halvon had been moved to one of the guarded holding rooms after his escape. His western men were kept elsewhere, and no one had been permitted to speak with him. Zeron had also doubled the guards.

“Bring Sorin and Orin,” I said. “Pryor too.” I looked toward Isla. “It’s time.”

We found Halvon sitting at a table with his hands restrained. He looked at my side when I entered. Whatever he expected to see wasn’t there. His attempt had failed.,

“Disappointed?” I asked.

Halvon said nothing.

I sat across from him. Isla took the chair beside me while Sorin remained near the door. Orin stood where Halvon could see him. That finally caused a reaction.

“You know him,” Isla said.

Halvon looked away.

Orin stepped closer to the table. He studied Halvon for several seconds before speaking. When he finally did, Halvon’s face changed again.

“Where is Selia Serath?” Orin asked.

Halvon’s eyes returned to him.

Sorin moved closer.

“You told me it was a rogue,” Sorin said. “You came back with blood on your clothes.” His hands closed at his sides. “Whose blood was it?”

Halvon looked from Sorin to Orin, then finally at me. He knew there was no lie left that could save him. Too many pieces had already come together.

“Selia survived that night,” Halvon said.

Isla sat straighter beside me.

Halvon leaned back in his chair.

“But she didn’t survive what came after.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 345

t to re

Left to die

(Caius)

Orin didn’t move. I watched Halvon instead, waiting to see whether he would try to turn those words into another game. He had already lied enough, and there was nowhere left for him to hide. Whatever happened to Selia was coming out now.

“What happened to her?” Isla asked.

Halvon looked at her. “I took her from the shelter.”

“Why?” Isla asked.

“Because she had records my father wanted destroyed.”

Orin stepped closer. Halvon watched him approach but didn't continue. I could see the question on Orin's face before he asked it. This wasn't only about old Keeper records anymore.

"Orin didn't send you," Halvon said. "I know what you're thinking."

Orin stopped beside the table. "You know nothing about what I'm thinking."

Halvon gave a short laugh. "I know you spent years wondering whether your son was involved."

Orin's expression changed. I remembered what we'd learned about Halvon's bloodline and the connection to Orin. Whatever existed between them had died long before today.

"Leave my father out of this," Halvon said.

Orin stared at him. "You brought him into this when you used his name and his blood to gain access to Keeper places."

Halvon looked away. That was enough to tell me Orin had found something important. I leaned forward in my chair.

"What records did Selia have?" I asked.

Halvon looked at me again. "Names. Routes. Shelters. Families who helped hide Celestials when Varen began hunting them."

Isla's hand closed around the arm of her chair. Those records could have exposed every family that had risked their lives to protect people like her. Even after Varen died, someone had wanted that information.

Leti to me

"Who wanted them?" Isla asked.

Halvon didn't answer.

I rested my hands on the table. "You tried to kill me last night. Whatever protection you thought you had ended the moment that knife entered my body."

Halvon met my eyes. "There is no one left to protect."

"Then answer her."

He remained quiet long enough to test what little patience I had left. I wasn't going to threaten him with death because he already knew where this ended. What mattered now

was getting every answer before that happened. Zeron could deal with anything Halvon tried after that.

“My father believed Varen was right,” Halvon finally said. “Not about everything, but about the Celestials.”

Orin’s face hardened. “He believed they should be controlled.”

Halvon nodded once. “He believed leaving that kind of power outside the Council was dangerous.”

Sorin walked closer to the table. His anger had been building since we’d entered the room. Halvon had worked beside him while hiding what he was doing. Seventeen years of lies were sitting between them.

“You used Council business to search the north,” Sorin said. “You brought me there so your movements would have an official reason.”

Halvon looked at him. “Yes.”

Sorin’s mouth pressed together. “And while I was sleeping, you went after Selia.”

“Yes.”

The answer made Orin turn away for a moment. Isla reached for my hand beneath the table, and I took hers. Halvon had finally stopped pretending, but I still didn’t know what he’d done after taking Selia. I wanted the entire truth before we left that room.

“Where did you take her?” I asked.

“Farther north,” Halvon answered. “There was another shelter beyond the one Elena’s mother found.”

Orin faced him again. “The stone shelter.”

Left to die

Halvon nodded. “Selia had been using it to store records.”

That explained why Elena’s mother had found signs of a struggle but no body. She had arrived after Halvon had taken Selia away. The metal marker she found had probably been lost during the struggle.

“What happened inside that shelter?” Isla asked.

Halvon looked at her for several seconds. “I questioned her.”

Isla didn’t look away. “About me?”

“About the Keepers.”

That answer didn’t satisfy me. Isla had been hidden through their network, and her survival had become tied to everything Varen feared. If Selia had records about the old families, there was no chance Halvon hadn’t asked about her.

“Did you know Isla was alive?” I asked.

“No.”

I studied him. “Did you know a Celestial child had survived?”

Halvon hesitated. “I knew one had disappeared.”

Orin came back to the table. “Selia would never have told you where she went.”

“She didn’t.”

There was something in his answer that made Isla look at him differently. Halvon hadn’t gotten what he wanted from Selia. Whatever he had done afterward had been punishment for her refusal.

“How did she die?” Isla asked.

Halvon’s gaze dropped to the table. “She refused to give me the records.”

Isla waited. “That wasn’t my question.”

Halvon lifted his head. “I kept her there for three days.”

Orin took another step toward him. Zeron moved closer from behind us, ready in case Orin lost control. I wouldn’t have blamed him if he did. Halvon saw the movement and continued before anyone touched him.

“She still wouldn’t talk,” Halvon said. “I left her there.”

Left to dia

Orin stared at him. “Alive?”

Halvon nodded. “Barely.”

Silence filled the room. I understood what he was saying without needing another explanation. He hadn't killed Selia quickly, but he'd known she wouldn't survive after he left.

"You left her to die," Isla said.

"Yes."

Orin closed his eyes. He had spent seventeen years without knowing what happened to Selia. Now he had his answer, and it was worse than simply finding her body in the north.

"Where are the records?" I asked.

Halvon looked at me. "I never found them."

That caught my attention. If Selia had died without giving him their location, there was still a chance they existed. But I wasn't interested in opening another search until we finished the one already in front of us.

"Then why did you keep searching?" I asked.

"Because years later, Elena's mother started asking the same questions Selia had been asking."

Isla's fingers tightened around mine. The connection was finally clear. Elena's mother hadn't stumbled into Halvon's secret by accident.

"And when Elena came here with the case, you knew those records might have survived," Isla said.

Halvon looked at her. "Yes."

I sat back and looked at the man who had spent years protecting a belief inherited from people who should have disappeared from our world long ago. He had used the Council, betrayed Sorin, killed a Keeper, hunted Elena's mother, used Kael and Renn, and tried to kill me. There was one question left that mattered before we decided what came next.

"Why did you stab me?" I asked.

Halvon met my eyes. "Because as long as you're alive, no one will ever control her."

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 346

(Caius)

For a moment, I said nothing. Halvon had finally admitted what this had always been about. The old belief hadn't disappeared with Varen or the men who followed him. It had been passed down until it reached the man sitting across from me.

"You thought killing me would make Isla easier to control?" I asked.

Halvon looked at Isla before answering. "I thought removing you would remove the greatest obstacle."

Isla released my hand and leaned toward the table. "You really thought losing my mate would make me listen to you?"

Halvon watched her. "Grief changes people."

A growl came from Vorak. My wolf had been weak since the wolfsbane entered our body, but there was nothing weak about his anger now. I kept my eyes on Halvon instead of giving him the reaction he wanted.

'Kill him,' Vorak said.

'Not yet.'

Sorin walked around the table until he stood where Halvon had to look at him. I could see how much this had changed something between them. Whatever respect Sorin once had for him was gone.

"Was your father responsible for Selia?" Sorin asked.

Halvon shook his head. "He gave me the names he had and told me what the records could contain."

Orin remained near the table. "So taking her was your decision."

Halvon looked at him. "Yes."

Orin nodded, but there was no relief in knowing that. Selia had been the daughter of a man he'd known and trusted. He had probably known her from the time she was young.

"What about Elena's mother?" Isla asked.

Halvon turned toward her. "She became a problem years later."

Isla's expression changed. "Did you kill her too?"

“No”

I watched him closely. Halvon had started answering more easily now that the truth about Selia was out. That didn’t mean I trusted every word coming from him.

Then what happened to her?” I asked

“I don’t know,” Halvon answered. “By the time I learned she had kept searching, she was already dead.

Pryor had remained near the wall through most of the questioning. He opened the notes he’d brought and read something before looking at Halvon. I knew he’d found a problem with the answer

‘Renn’s name appears in her notes before her death, Pryor said

Halvon glanced toward him. ‘Penn wasn’t working for me then.”

That matched what Renn had already told us. He’d helped Elena’s mother before Halvon found him and offered him work later. For once, Halvon’s answer fit what we already knew.

“Why hire him after?” I asked

“Because he knew what she had been searching for Halvon answered. “I wanted to know what shed left behind.”

Isla looked toward Orin. The wooden case had survived because Elena’s mother had trusted her daughter with it. Halvon had spent years trying to find what Selia refused to give him, only for the trail to end with Blena.

“And Kael?’ Isla asked.

Halvon looked back at her. “Renn found him.”

I felt my anger rise again. Kael had been inside Wraithbone for years and had given information to Halvon for eight months. That betrayal had brought Halvon closer to Isla than he should ever have been.

“What did you want from Wraithbone?” I asked.

“Information at first,’ Halvon answered. “Then Elena arrived.”

That was when everything had changed. Kael had overheard enough to tell Renn about the case and Isla’s pregnancy, Halvon had come here knowing more than he should have known.

“Did you tell Kael to harm Isla?” I asked.

“No.”

“Did you tell him to harm our child?”

Halvon shook his head. “No.”

I believed that answer only because everything he’d done pointed somewhere else. Halvon wanted the case, the records, and me dead. He had wanted Isla without the protection of her mate and the Crown behind her.

Isla rose from her chair. “You still don’t understand anything about me.”

Halvon looked up at her. “I understand what you are.”

“No, you understand what men like Varen feared.” Isla rested one hand on the table. “You spent your life afraid of power you couldn’t own.”

Halvon didn’t answer. He couldn’t tell her she was wrong without denying everything he’d already admitted. Isla stepped away from the table and came back beside me.

Sorin looked toward me. “There will need to be a full record of everything he admitted here.”

Pryor closed the notes. “I’ll prepare it.”

I stood, and pain pulled through my side. It wasn’t enough to stop me, but Isla noticed and moved closer. I wasn’t staying in this room any longer than necessary.

“Zeron, keep him under guard,” I said.

Zeron nodded. “He won’t leave this room.”

Halvon looked at me as I turned away. “You’re going to execute me.”

I stopped and faced him again. There was no reason to pretend otherwise. He had attacked the Alpha King inside Wraithbone after years of crimes that had finally been uncovered.

“Yes,” I said.

Halvon stared at me. “Then why keep asking questions?”

“Because death doesn’t erase what you did.”

I walked toward the door with Isla beside me. Orin remained behind for a moment, still looking at Halvon. I wondered whether there was anything left he wanted from the grandson who had chosen everything Orin had spent centuries fighting against.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 347

As long as you're alive

As long as you're alive

Caius)

We returned to the room where Lyrienne and Elena were waiting. Elena stood when she saw us, and her eyes went straight to Orin. She had been waiting for answers about her mother and the case she'd protected all these years. Now we had more than any of us expected to find.

"Did he tell you what happened?" Elena asked.

Orin walked over to her. "He admitted taking Selia and leaving her to die. He also admitted he spent years looking for the records she protected." His voice remained calm despite everything we'd just heard. "Your mother continued what Selia started."

Elena lowered herself back into her chair. Lyrienne sat beside her while she took in what Orin had said. Her mother had died without Elena knowing why she'd spent years looking into Halvon. At least part of that answer was finally hers.

"Did he have anything to do with my mother's death?" Elena asked.

Orin shook his head. "He says he didn't, and what we already know supports that."

Elena looked down at her hands. "So she died still trying to find out what happened."

"Yes," Orin answered.

I sat beside Isla, grateful when the pain in my side eased once I stopped moving. Sera would probably be furious when she learned how long I'd been out of bed. I wasn't looking forward to that conversation. Vorak wasn't either.

'She'll blame you,' he said.

'She usually does.'

Pryor placed Elena's mother's notes on the table. We had answered the biggest questions surrounding Halvon, but there were still things that needed to be dealt with. The western alliance needed to know what one of its Council members had done. The Council would also need every piece of evidence before Halvon's execution.

"I'll prepare copies of his confession and the records we recovered," Pryor said. "Nothing leaves Wraithbone until you've reviewed it."

As long as you're alive

Sorin took a seat across from us. He looked exhausted, though I doubted it had anything to do with lack of sleep. Halvon had used him to hide what he'd been doing seventeen years ago. Now sorin would have to return to the Council and explain exactly how far that betrayal went.

"I'll call the Council together once I return," Sorin said. "Halvon's position will be stripped before anything else is done."

"He won't need it much longer," I answered.

Sorin looked at me. "No, he won't."

Isla rested her hand on the table. "What happens to his western alliance?"

Sorin considered the question before answering. "Halvon's crimes belong to him unless we find evidence that others knowingly helped him."

That was the right decision. I wasn't interested in punishing wolves simply because they'd lived under Halvon's influence. His two men who came to Wraithbone would still be questioned, but so far nothing showed they knew what he had planned.

"What about his father?" Elena asked.

Orin looked at her. "He's dead."

Elena nodded. "Then this really does end with Halvon."

"It ends with his part in it," Orin answered.

I understood the difference. The Keeper records were still missing, but finding them didn't need to become another crisis. If Selia had hidden them well enough to keep them from Halvon for seventeen years, they could remain hidden until we decided whether recovering them was necessary.

"We're not going north again right now," I said.

Isla looked at me. “I agree.”

That surprised me enough that she noticed. Isla had spent months chasing answers about herself, the Celestials and the people who had protected her. A missing collection of Keeper records would normally have been enough to send her searching. Things were different now.

“The records have been hidden this long,” Isla said. “They can wait.”

Lyrienne smiled at her. “Good.”

Isla looked at her mother. “Don’t sound so surprised.”

Lyrienne laughed. “I didn’t say anything.”

#00%

As long as you’re alive

+25 Points Elena picked up the wooden case from beside her chair. It had belonged to her mother, and before that it had been connected to a line stretching back to Mara Voss. Halvon had wanted it badly enough to send others after it. He would never touch it now.

“I want to keep this,” Elena said.

“It’s yours,” Isla answered.

Elena ran her fingers across the wood. “I don’t know what I’ll do with everything inside”

“You don’t have to decide today,” Isla said.

Orin sat beside Elena. I watched him look at the case, but he didn’t ask to take it. He’d spent centuries protecting secrets that had cost too many people their lives. Perhaps he understood better than anyone that some decisions didn’t need to be made immediately.

The door opened and Sera walked in. Her eyes found me before anyone else, then moved to the chair I was sitting in. I already knew what was coming. Isla looked far too amused.

“I left you resting,” Sera said.

“I rested.”

Sera crossed her arms. “For how long?”

I looked at Isla for help. She suddenly became very interested in Elena’s case. Lyrienne wasn’t any better.

“Long enough,” I answered.

Sera stared at me. “Back to bed.”

I frowned. “Sera.”

“Now.”

Vorak laughed in my head. I ignored him and stood, which only proved Sera’s point when pain returned to my side. Isla was beside me before I could pretend it hadn’t happened.

“We’re going,” Isla said.

I looked at her. “You enjoyed saying that.”

“Very much.”

I didn’t argue again. Halvon was under guard, his confession had been heard by everyone who needed to hear it, and Pryor had enough evidence to prepare the Council record. There was nothing left that required me to destroy Sera’s patience today.

As long as you’re alive

Isla walked with me back toward our quarters. Her hand found mine once we were away from everyone else. I looked at her and saw some of the strain she’d carried since the attack was finally one. Halvon could no longer reach either of us.

“We’re really close to the end of this, aren’t we?” Isla asked.

“We are.”

She rested her other hand over mine. There were still things waiting for us after Halvon, including my father and the visit we’d delayed. But those things belonged to our life, not another enemy waiting in the dark.

For once, I was ready for that.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 348

The life ahead

425 Poings

The life ahead sla)

I made Caius lie down as soon as we reached our quarters. He complained while I pulled the blanket over his legs, which only made me ignore him. Sera had been right about him doing too much. I could tell from the way he moved that his side was bothering him again.

“I’m capable of covering myself,” Caius said.

I sat beside him. “You were also capable of staying in bed.”

“Halvon needed to be questioned.”

“And now he has been.”

Caius looked like he wanted to argue, but he seemed to think better of it. I was glad because I wasn’t interested in another discussion about what his body could handle. The sight of that knife entering him was still too clear in my mind. I didn’t want him knowing how often I’d thought about it since.

Vaela understood without me saying anything. She had remained close since Caius was injured, checking Vorak through the bond whenever she wanted reassurance. Vorak was getting stronger, and that helped both of us. Soon this would be something we could put behind us.

‘He is safe,’ Vaela said.

‘I know.’

I looked down when Caius reached for my hand. His fingers closed around mine, and I moved closer to him. The fear I’d felt when Sera said there was wolfsbane on the knife wasn’t something I wanted to experience again. Halvon had come too close to taking Caius from us.

“I’m okay,” Caius said.

I met his eyes. “I know.”

He pulled my hand toward him and kissed my fingers. I knew he could feel some of what I was feeling through our bond. There wasn’t much point pretending with him. Still, I didn’t want the rest of our day to be about Halvon.

“What happens now?” I asked.

“With Halvon?”

“With us.”

The life ahead

I smiled at her. “I do.”

Point

The visit suddenly felt bigger than it had before. Caius would see his father after more than two years, I would meet another part of his family, and Lyrienne would be there with us. For once, the next journey wasn’t about chasing someone who wanted to hurt us.

Lyrienne stayed until Caius finished eating, then left us alone again. I climbed onto the bed beside him, careful not to touch his injured side. He put an arm around me and pulled me closer. I rested my head against him.

“We should send my father another message,” Caius said.

“Tomorrow.”

He kissed the top of my head. “Tomorrow.”

I closed my eyes and let myself think about what was ahead instead of everything behind us. Halvon would face his punishment, and the Council could deal with the damage he’d caused. Caius and I had something far more important waiting for us now.

We had a family to build.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 349

Two days

Two days aius)

I woke the next morning with Isla still beside me. My side hurt less than it had the night before, and Vorak was stronger too. Sera would probably still find a reason to tell me I needed another day of rest. I was already planning to disagree.

‘Do not start, Vorak said.

‘I haven’t said anything.’

‘You were thinking it.’

I looked at Isla when she moved beside me. Her eyes opened a few seconds later, and she smiled when she saw me watching her. I reached over and touched her cheek. After everything that had happened, waking beside her felt like enough.

“How do you feel?” she asked.

“Better.”

“That isn’t what I asked.”

I should have known she wouldn’t accept that answer. “My side doesn’t hurt as much, and Vorak is stronger.”

Isla sat up and looked at my side as though she could see through my shirt. She had been doing that since the stabbing. I knew what happened was still bothering her. I couldn’t change what she’d seen, but I could give her time to believe I was recovering.

“We should send your father that message today,” she said.

“I haven’t forgotten.”

“Good.”

I reached for the paper on the table beside the bed. We had already told my father enough for him to know why we’d delayed the visit. I wasn’t going to explain everything about Halvon in writing. That conversation could happen when we arrived.

I wrote that the problem keeping us at Wraithbone had been handled. I told him we still intended to visit and that Lyrienne would be traveling with us. Isla read over my arm as I wrote. She made me change one sentence because apparently it sounded too much like an order.

“It was not an order,” I said.

Two days

“It sounded like one.”

“It’s my father.”

“Exactly.”

I changed it because arguing with her would take longer. When I finished, I called one of the guards and had the message sent. My father would receive it before the end of the day. All that remained was getting Sera to approve the journey.

That proved more difficult. Sera arrived shortly after breakfast and checked my wound again. She asked about pain, dizziness, weakness, and Vorak. I answered every question without pretending I felt better than I did.

“You can travel in two days,” Sera said.

I stared at her. “Two?”

“Yes.”

“I can travel tomorrow.”

Sera packed away what she’d brought. “Then you can spend tomorrow wishing you were traveling.”

Isla laughed from where she was. I looked at her, but she made no attempt to hide it. Sera had never cared about telling an Alpha King no. I had learned that years ago.

“Two days,” I said.

Sera nodded. “And only if nothing changes.”

I agreed because it was the fastest way to end the conversation. Once Sera left, Isla came over and sat beside me. She looked far too pleased with the result. I already knew what she was going to say.

“Don’t.”

“I didn’t say anything.”

“You were going to.”

She smiled. “Maybe.”

Later that morning, Sorin asked to see us before he and Pryor returned to the Council. We met them in one of the smaller rooms with Zeron. Orin had decided to remain another day with Elena. Halvon was still under guard and would remain there until his punishment was carried out.

“The Council needs to know what happened,” Sorin said.

Two days

“They’ll know,” I answered.

“I make sure they receive everything.”

I looked at Pryor. The records they had gathered were enough to prove what Halvon had done without leaving room for anyone to protect his name. Pryor would take the records back with him and make sure everything was properly documented. Halvon's position on the Council wouldn't save him.

"Kael and Renn?" Isla asked.

Zeron looked toward her. "Still separated."

"They'll answer for what they did."

Isla nodded but didn't say anything else. Kael had betrayed Wraithbone, and Renn had worked for Halvon after knowing enough to understand what kind of man he was. Their punishment would come separately. Halvon's crimes went far beyond either of theirs.

Sorin remained standing across from me. Learning what Halvon had done seventeen years ago had affected him more than he wanted anyone to know. He had trusted a man who had been lying to him for years. Now he had to return to the Council with that truth.

"I should have questioned his story then," Sorin said.

"You had no reason to believe he was lying."

"I saw the blood."

"And he gave you an explanation."

Sorin looked toward Isla. "An explanation I accepted."

Isla stood from her chair. "What Halvon did belongs to Halvon."

Sorin nodded. I knew he wasn't ready to forgive himself, but that wasn't something Isla or I could do for him. He would have to find his own way through it. At least Selia's truth wouldn't remain hidden.

Sorin and Pryor left Wraithbone later that morning to take the evidence back to the Council. Pryor would begin preparing the full record of Halvon's crimes as soon as they arrived. Whatever happened next with the Council no longer required Isla or me to remain here. Zeron stayed with us for a few more minutes before returning to his own duties.

"Get some rest," I said.

Zeron looked suspicious. "That's an order?"

Two days

“Yes.”

“Something must be wrong with you.”

Isla laughed. Zeron left before I could respond. I decided not to call him back. He had earned one comment.

By afternoon, Lyrienne had started talking to Isla about the journey. I listened while they discussed what Isla might need to bring. Somehow a trip that should have required very little was becoming, more complicated by the minute. I stayed out of it.

My father’s reply arrived before dinner. I recognized his writing as soon as the message was handed to me. Isla came to stand beside me while I opened it. Lyrienne remained nearby.

“He says we’re welcome as soon as Sera clears me to travel,” I said.

Isla smiled. “Anything else?”

“He says Nara has already started asking questions about you.”

Isla groaned. “I haven’t even met her yet.”

I continued reading. My father had written that his mate was looking forward to meeting Isla as well. He ended by saying that more than two years was long enough. I couldn’t disagree with him.

“We’ll leave in two days,” I said.

Lyrienne nodded. “I’ll be ready.”

I looked at Isla. She was smiling, and I knew she was nervous even if she wouldn’t admit it. Meeting my family would be different from everything we’d spent the last several months doing. No investigation waited for us there.

In the evening, Isla and I ate with Lyrienne before returning to our quarters. My side was improving, and Vorak no longer felt as weak as he had the day before. Two more days would give us enough time to prepare and allow Sera to stop worrying. After that, we could finally leave Wraithbone for something that wasn’t another fight.

haside me and took my hand. Our child was still too small for either of us to see or feel, but are had already changed what family meant to me. Soon Isla would meet

Then we could begin deciding what came after.

Home with her

Home with her aius)

Two days later, Sera finally gave me permission to travel. I expected another argument, but she checked the wound and told me it had healed enough. Vorak was back to himself, which mattered just as much. Isla looked more relieved than I was.

“You are still recovering,” Sera said. “If the pain returns, you rest.”

“I understand.”

Sera looked at Isla. “Make sure he does.”

“I will.”

Zeron, Raith, and Lira were waiting outside when we were ready. Several guards had already prepared the vehicles that would take us to the airfield. Lyrienne joined us carrying less than Isla despite everything Isla had packed. I wasn’t going to point that out again.

“Everything is covered here,” Zeron said. “Halvon has guards with him at all times.”

“Send word if anything changes.”

Raith looked at me. “Try not to find another problem while you’re away.”

“I’m visiting my father.”

“That doesn’t answer me.”

Lira laughed. “He’s right.”

Isla hugged all three of them before we left. Raith tried to avoid his, but Isla caught him before he got far. I decided not to help him. He had brought it on himself.

We left Wraithbone shortly afterward. Isla sat beside me during the drive while Lyrienne traveled in another vehicle. My father had settled in Scotland years ago, and I hadn’t visited him in more than two years. Thinking about that made the distance feel longer than it was.

The airfield came into view less than an hour later. Isla was looking through the window when the plane appeared ahead. Her attention went straight to it. I felt the change in her through our bond before she said anything.

Home with her

She kept looking at it. “I’ve never seen one before.”

turned toward her. I had known there were many things she'd never experienced before coming to Wraithbone. Somehow, flying had never occurred to me. To me, it was simply another way to travel.

"We're going inside that?" she asked.

"Unless you'd prefer swimming to Scotland."

She looked at me. "I could probably make it."

I smiled. "I'm not testing that theory."

The vehicle stopped, and Isla got out with me. She looked up at the plane before following me toward it. I could feel that she wasn't completely comfortable, but she didn't hesitate. Curiosity seemed to be winning.

'It flies with no wings that move, Vaela said through our bond.

Isla glanced at me. "Vaela doesn't trust it either."

'Neither do I,' Vorak said.

I ignored him. "It is perfectly safe."

Isla looked at the plane again. "You say that because you've done this before."

"Many times."

"Then if something goes wrong, I'll blame you."

"Fair."

We boarded with Lyrienne and the guards. Isla looked around as soon as we entered, taking in everything without trying to hide her interest. She chose the seat beside me and immediately looked through the window. I could tell she had questions.

"What happens now?" she asked.

"We take off."

"I know that part."

I smiled. "Then why did you ask?"

She gave me a look. "I meant what does it feel like?"

I explained as much as I could without making it sound worse than it was. Isla listened and

Hope with her fastened her belt after watching me do mine. When the engines started, she looked toward the window again. Her hand found mine.

osed my fingers around hers. She wasn't afraid enough to want to leave, but I could feel her uncertainty. Everything happening around her was unfamiliar. She dealt with it the same way she dealt with most things she didn't understand by watching and learning.

The plane began moving. Isla sat straighter when it picked up speed. Her fingers closed harder around mine when we left the ground. She looked out the window instead of closing her eyes.

"We're actually flying," she said.

"We are."

She stared outside for several seconds. The land below us became smaller as we climbed. Her grip on my hand loosened. The uncertainty I had felt through our bond began to disappear.

"I don't know if I like this yet," she said.

"You've been in the air for less than five minutes."

"Exactly. Give me time."

Lyrienne laughed from across from us. Isla looked at her before returning her attention to the window. Soon she was asking me what she was seeing below us. I suspected the fear had already lost most of its hold.

Vorak was less impressed. He preferred having his feet on the ground, though he refused to admit it. Vaela seemed to have changed her mind once she realized nothing was going wrong. The two of them became quiet while Isla continued watching outside.

A few hours later, we landed in Scotland. Isla handled the landing better than the takeoff and looked almost disappointed when the plane stopped. I didn't mention it. She would deny enjoying herself if I did.

Vehicles were waiting for us outside the airfield. We separated into them and began the drive toward my father's territory. Isla watched everything outside while I pointed out places I remembered. The last part of the journey wouldn't take long.

"Does Nara know we're coming today?" Isla asked.

“Yes.”

Home with her

Isla looked at me. “Good.”

understood. Telling my father and the rest of my family together mattered to her now too. I was glad I’d waited instead of putting it in a message. Some news deserved more than words on paper.

As we entered my father’s territory, I started recognizing more of the land around us. More than two years had passed since I’d been here. I had left alone the last time. Now Isla was beside me, Lyrienne was traveling behind us, and my child was growing inside my mate.

The main residence appeared ahead. Several people were already waiting outside.recognized my father immediately with his mate beside him. Nara stood nearby.

Isla’s hand found mine again. I looked at her and saw the nerves she’d been trying to hide. They weren’t about planes anymore. I squeezed her hand.

“We’re here,” I said.

She looked at me before turning toward my family. I felt her gather herself as the vehicle came to a stop. She had faced things far worse than meeting my father. Still, I understood why this mattered differently.

I stepped out first and waited for her. Isla took my hand and came to stand beside me. My father was already walking toward us. After more than two years, I was finally home with a family of my own.

The news we brought

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 350

The news we brought aius)

My father reached us before anyone else. He looked at me, then at Isla, and something in his expression changed. More than two years had passed since we’d stood in the same place. I hadn’t realized how much I’d missed him until then.

“Caius.”

“It’s good to see you, father.”

He pulled me into a hug before I could say anything else. I returned it, careful of my side even though the wound had healed. When he released me, his eyes went straight to Isla. I reached for her hand again.

“This is Isla.”

My father smiled at her. “I’ve been waiting a long time to meet you.”

Isla returned his smile. “I’ve heard a lot about you.”

“Hopefully not everything.”

I looked at him. “I told her enough.”

Maeve came forward next. I had known my father’s mate for years, and seeing her again felt familiar in a way I hadn’t expected. She hugged me before turning to Isla. She looked genuinely happy to finally meet her.

“I’m Maeve,” she said. “I’ve been looking forward to meeting you.”

“It’s nice to finally meet you too.”

“Welcome. I’m glad you’re here.”

Before anyone else could speak, Nara pushed past my father. She looked exactly as I remembered, though her hair was longer. At twenty, she still had the same habit of deciding patience was unnecessary. Her eyes moved between Isla and me.

“So you’re Isla.”

Isla smiled. “And you’re Nara.”

Nara grinned. “He talks about me?”

“Enough.”

The news we brought

1 sighed. This was already going exactly as expected. Nara stepped closer to Isla and looked at her like she had been waiting years for this meeting. She probably had a hundred questions ready.

anore her,” I said.

Nara turned toward me. “You’ve been here two minutes.”

“And you’re already annoying me.”

“Good. I was worried you might have changed.”

Isla laughed beside me. Nara’s attention returned to her, and I knew immediately they were going to get along. That would probably become a problem for me later. Vorak seemed amused by the thought.

Lyrienne joined us after getting out of the second vehicle. My father recognized her before I introduced them, which didn’t surprise me. Anyone who had studied the old Celestial records would know her name. Meeting her alive was another matter.

“Lyrienne Vale,” my father said.

Lyrienne nodded. “Aldren Blackthorn.”

My father looked at me. There were questions in his eyes, but he didn’t ask them there. I’d told him enough in my message to prepare him for our visit. The rest needed a private conversation.

We went inside while the guards dealt with our belongings. Isla stayed beside me, though Nara had already started talking to her. Maeve joined them as we entered. I had a feeling Isla wouldn’t need my help settling in.

The residence hadn’t changed much. I recognized the furniture, the paintings, and the large windows facing the land behind the house. My father had always preferred keeping things the way they were. Nara used to complain about it constantly.

“You didn’t change anything,” I said.

My father looked around. “Why would I?”

“Because some of this has been here since I was a child.”

“And it still works.”

I smiled. There was no point arguing with him. Isla was looking around while listening to Nara explain something about the house. She caught me watching and came back to my side.

“Your sister talks a lot,” she whispered.

“I warned you.”

“You didn’t.”

“Lshould have.”

Nara looked over from several feet away. “I can hear you.”

Isla laughed again. I hadn’t expected to enjoy watching her with my family this much. She had spent most of her life without anything like this. I wanted her to know she belonged here as much as I did.

Maeve suggested we eat before discussing anything serious. After hours of traveling, nobody argued. Isla’s reaction to the suggestion told me she was hungry again. Her appetite had become impossible to predict since the pregnancy began.

We gathered around the dining table a short while later. Nara chose the seat beside Isla before I could. I took the other side and watched Nara immediately start asking about Wraithbone. Isla answered without any trouble.

“Is Caius as controlling there as he is everywhere else?” Nara asked.

“Yes.”

I looked at Isla. “That answer came too quickly.”

She turned toward me. “Because it was easy.”

My father laughed from across the table. I shook my head and reached for my food. Bringing Isla here had apparently given everyone another person to use against me.

Lyrienne watched the exchange with a smile. She had been quieter since we arrived, allowing Isla to have this moment without taking attention away from her. I appreciated that. Isla deserved the chance to meet my family without another problem waiting between every conversation.

My father asked about our journey, and Isla told him it had been her first time on a plane. Nara immediately wanted to know whether she’d been afraid. Isla admitted she’d been unsure but refused to let Nara make it sound worse than it was.

id “I just didn’t know what to expect.”

The news we brought conversation about Silvermere was coming. Before that happened, there was something Isla and I needed to tell them. I looked at her, and she understood without me saying anything.

She reached beneath the table and took my hand. I could feel her excitement through our bond. We'd kept the news between the people closest to us at Wraithbone. Telling my father made everything feel even more real.

"I think we should tell them now," Isla said.

I nodded. "Whenever you're ready."

Everyone looked toward us. Nara immediately became interested, while my father's attention moved between Isla and me. Maeve studied us for a moment, and I wondered if she'd already guessed. Isla looked at me once more before turning back to them.

"We're having a baby," she said.

Nara's mouth fell open. My father stared at us for several seconds before his face changed completely. Maeve covered her mouth with one hand.

Then everyone started moving at once.

princess jody

Someone with a better memory than me. Did I already have a name for Caius's father's mate?

Why I came

Gaius)

Nara was the first to reach Isla. She came around the table and wrapped her arms around her before I could tell her to be careful. Isla laughed and hugged her back. My father stood next, still looking at me as if he needed another moment to understand what we'd told him.

"You're serious?" Nara asked.

Isla smiled at her. "Very serious."

Maeve came around the table after Nara released her. She hugged Isla, then stepped back and looked at her with happiness across her face. I glanced at my father again. He still hadn't said anything.

"Congratulations," Maeve said. "To both of you."

"Thank you," Isla answered.

My father finally walked around the table. He stopped in front of me and placed a hand on my arm.

I had expected happiness from him, but there was something else there too. He was going to be a grandfather.

“A baby,” my father said.

I smiled. “Yes, father.”

He pulled me into another hug. This one lasted longer than the first, and I could hear Nara talking excitedly behind us. When my father released me, he went directly to Isla. He hesitated before opening his arms.

“May I?” he asked.

“Of course,” Isla answered.

She stepped into his embrace. My father held her carefully before releasing her. He looked happier than I’d seen him in years. Vorak shared that happiness with me.

‘Our pup already has more family waiting, Vorak said.

I looked toward Isla. She was answering something Nara had asked while Maeve stood beside to