The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 91

No mercy given–2

It broke completely.

“No,” Maren said, her voice tinraveling as she stepped forward before the guards stopped her. “Alpha King, I did what was required to maintain order.” Her eyes turned toward Isla, desperate and searching for something she had never given. “Isla, ter him, tell him I wasn’t the worst of them.”

“Don’t look at my mate,” I said.

My voice remained even, but it pressed through the hall with weight that couldn’t be ignored. Maren flinched and dropped her gaze instantly, as if it had been forced down. “And don’t speak to her at all,” I continued. “You lost that right long before today.”

No one moved after that.

I shifted my attention without delay. “Derek Thorne is stripped of rank, standing, and paternal authority,” I said. “His land rights are revoked, and he will stand under review for banishment.” The sound that left him wasn’t controlled.

It broke out of him.

He dropped to his knees.

“Isla,” he said, his voice shaking as both hands lifted toward her. “I failed you.” His breath hitched before he forced the rest out. “Please, I can still fix this.”

She didn’t respond.

Helene dropped beside him without hesitation. Vera followed, her body shaking as she tried to steady herself. Cole lowered himself more slowly, not from confusion, but from the weight of finally being seen. Brent held his ground for a moment too long before Raith stepped forward and forced the decision out of him.

“Please,” Helene said, her voice breaking as she looked toward Isla. “You don’t have to forgive us, but you can ask for mercy.”

Vera pressed her hand to her mouth, unable to steady her breathing. “We saw enough,” she said. “We just didn’t stop it.”

Cole drew in a controlled breath before speaking. “I knew what was happening,” he said. “I chose not to involve myself because it didn’t affect me directly.” He lowered his head. “That was my choice.”

Brent didn’t hesitate.

“I did it,” he said.

The words came out stripped of excuse before they could form. “I put my hands on her, I followed orders, and I didn’t care what it did to her.” His eyes lifted once, and there was nothing left in them but truth. “I knew exactly what I was doing.”

His voice dropped.

No awey d

Hust didn’t think it would come back on me.”

“I stepped forward.

“You didn’t follow orders,” I said, “You used them.” My gaze held his. “Your actions weren’t obedience. They were choice.”

He didn’t look up.

He didn’t need to.

Claim

“You will be confined under royal guard pending sentencing,” I said. “And your sentence will reflect direct harm, not association.” There was no need to say more. The room understood.

I shifted my attention without pause.

“Torwin,” I said.

His name didn’t need to be raised to carry. He stiffened where he stood, the reaction immediate, like his body had understood before his mind caught up. He didn’t step forward, but he didn’t try to hide either.

“You maintained the restraint,” I said. “You placed the wolfsbane chain. You secured it, and you returned to it.” My voice stayed even. “You didn’t act once. You made it routine.”

The room felt that differently.

Not silence.

Not compliance.

Action.

His breathing shifted, just enough to break the control he had tried to hold. That was the first sign of it, and it was enough. He understood where this was going.

“You will not be held for review,” I said. “You will not be placed under standard confinement.” My gaze held his without wavering. “You will be subjected to the same restraint you enforced.”

That landed deeper than noise.

Not panic.

Understanding.

“The wolfsbane chain will be placed,” I continued. “It will remain, and it will not be eased for your comfort.” My voice didn’t change. “You will endure it under controlled supervision.”

He tried to speak.

I didn’t allow it.

“You made it routine,” I said. “Now you will understand it.”

I shifted my attention back to all of them. “You don’t beg her now,” I said. “You don’t crawl to the one you broke and call it remorse because consequence found you.” My voice stayed level. “You had years to

Chem ehoose differently, and you chose harm every time.”

Derek bowed his head low.

“Alpha King,” he said.

“No,” I answered.

The word closed the space completely. “You will not speak unless I allow it, and you will not look to her for mercy you denied her,” I said. “Mercy asked from fear is not repentance.”

No one tried again.

I turned my attention back to the hall. “The remaining accused will be sentenced according to their roles,” I said. “Those who enforced harm will be confined, and those who enabled it will be stripped of position and placed under supervision.” My gaze moved across them. “Those who chose silence will serve the pack they failed under direct authority until their debt is answered.”

The room absorbed it without sound. There was no denial left that could stand under what had been said. Fear remained, but it had nowhere to go. That was enough.

I turned back to Isla.

She stood where she had from the beginning, wrapped in my cloak, unmoved by everything that had collapsed around her. The people who had once forced her down now knelt in front of her with nothing left to stand on. She didn’t look away.

“Sentence has begun,” I said. “It will not be reduced by tears, rank, or begging.” My gaze moved across them one last time. “When this day ends, Ashcrest will remember what justice feels like.”

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 92

No one left untouched–1

(Caius)

I didn’t speak again after that.

There was no need to repeat what had already settled into the room. My men moved the moment the last word left me, not waiting for anything further Chains were secured, positions shifted, and control replaced what had once been tolerated.

Rodan resisted first.

He drove forward against the hold on him, trying to force space that no longer existed. Two of my men stepped in without hesitation and forced him back, locking him in place before he could gain anything. He struggled again, but it changed nothing.

They began to move him toward the doors.

Maren followed with her voice.

It broke out of her at first, loud and desperate, reaching for anything that might still answer her. When nothing came back, when no one moved to support her, it shifted. By

the time my men took hold of her, there wasn't anything left in it that could command attention.

She didn't fight the same way after that.

Rodan reached the doors first.

He tried once more to turn back, to look into the hall as if he could pull something with him. One of my men forced him forward before he could settle into that attempt. The doors opened, and he was taken through without another word.

The sound of it closing followed after.

Maren was next.

Loving

She looked back once as she was led forward, her gaze moving across the room until it found isla. Her mouth parted as if she meant to speak, but nothing came out this time. My men didn't slow for it.

She was taken through the same doors.

Torvin didn't need to be called.

The moment the path cleared, my men moved for him without instruction, closing the space before he could shift or step away. He stiffened under their hold, the control he had carried for years breaking the second it was turned on him. His eyes moved once toward Isla, but whatever he thought to say never made it past his throat.

He was turned and moved forward.

There was no struggle that held, only a brief resistance that ended the moment pressure was applied. The same hands that had once secured the wolfsbane chain now held him without authority or control. The doors opened again, and he was taken through without a word.

Brent followed after.

"He didn't look at anyone when they reached him, and he didri't speak again. When they took his arms and turned him, he went without resistance. There wasn't anything left in him that believed movement would change what had already been decided.

That told me enough.

Derek came last.

He remained on his knees until my men reached him, not attempting to stand or steady himself. When they took hold of him, he went with them without resistance, his weight shifting forward as if standing no longer belonged to him. His gaze stayed lowered as they turned him toward the doors.

They didn’t need to force him.

Helene broke when they pulled him away.

She reached for him without thinking, her hand catching his sleeve before one of my men stopped her. The contact didn’t last, and she didn’t try again once it was gone. She stayed where she was, her hands empty.

Vera didn’t move at all.

She remained on her knees, her head lowered, her hands pressed together as if still holding something that wasn’t there anymore. Cole stayed beside her, silent and still, not trying to follow and not trying to stop anything. They understood what had been taken from them.

Understanding didn’t change what came next.

My men didn’t rush the removals.

Each one was carried out with control, without force where it wasn’t needed and without hesitation where it was. They didn’t look to the pack, and they didn’t allow the pack to interfere. This no longer belonged to

Ashcrest.

It belonged to me.

The doors closed behind the last of them.

The hall didn’t return to what it had been before, and it wasn’t meant to. Helene’s breathing carried for a moment, uneven but gradually steadying as she realized no one would answer it. Vera didn’t lift her head, and Cole didn’t move from where he knelt

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 93

No one left untouched–2

The rest of the pack remained where they had been left.

No one stepped forward.

No one spoke.

That difference held.

I let the quiet settle where it needed to.

They felt it fully this time, without distraction or distance to soften it. What had been removed didn't take their choices with it. What they had allowed still remained.

I stepped forward once.

It was enough to draw every eye back to me without effort. They didn't look away this time, and they didn't try to separate themselves from what had been said. There was nowhere left to stand outside of it.

"From this moment," I said, my voice carrying through the hall, "Ashcrest stands under direct royal authority."

The words settled without interruption.

There wasn't anyone left to question it.

"You won't act without order," I continued. "You won't enforce, punish, or decide anything outside of what's given to you." My gaze moved across them once. "What you failed to do before won't be repeated."

No one answered.

They understood.

"You'll remain where you are until instructed otherwise," I said. "No one leaves this hall without permission. "I let the pause sit just long enough. "That includes all of you."

A few shifted at that.

Not enough to challenge it, but enough to show that they felt it settle into place. The freedom they once relied on was gone. There wasn't anything left of it to return to.

I turned away from them.

I didn't need to watch them continue to absorb it. That part would take hold on its own and stay. What mattered had already been set.

My attention returned to Isla.

She hadn’t moved.

She stood where she had from the beginning, wrapped in my cloak, her gaze fixed ahead. The room had changed around her, the people had been removed, and the pressure that had once surrounded her was gone, but she remained exactly where she had chosen to stand.

No coa felt w

That wasn’t hesitation

“That was control.

I stepped toward her

Claim

Not in a way that blocked her and not in a way that forced her to adjust. I stopped close enough that she didn’t need to raise her voice if she chose to speak. She didn’t look at me right away.

Her eyes stayed on the doors.

“They’re gone,” I said.

I didn’t raise my voice.

I didn’t need to.

She heard me.

Her hand tightened slightly against the edge of the cloak for a moment, then stilled again. She drew in a breath, not uneven, just enough to hold something steady.

“I know,” she said.

Her voice was quiet, but it held.

Not because it needed to reach the room, but because it didn’t need anything to support it. She didn’t turn away from the doors immediately. She let herself look at them.

That mattered..

No one interrupted her.

No one tried to move or speak. Even those still kneeling stayed where they were. They understood this moment didn’t belong to them.

It belonged to her.

She lowered her gaze after a moment.

Not in submission and not in retreat, just in completion. What had needed to be seen had been seen. What had needed to be faced had already been done.

She turned her head then.

Her eyes met mine.

There wasn’t any question in them.

There wasn’t any request.

Only awareness.

“They won’t come back,” she said.

It wasn’t asked as a question.

Claim

It was something she already knew.

“They won’t,” I answered.

There wasn’t any hesitation in it,

No space for doubt.

She held my gaze for a moment longer, then gave a single nod.

I turned slightly, bringing the rest of the hall back into my line of sight without stepping away from her. They were still watching, still waiting, still holding themselves in place as if movement might bring consequence down on them next.

They weren’t wrong.

“This isn’t finished,” I said.

My voice carried without effort.

“What you’ve seen today is the beginning,” I continued. “Not the end.”

No one reacted.

They listened.

They understood there was no path back to what had been. There was only forward, and it wouldn’t be easy. That was the truth they were left with.

“You’ll answer for your silence,” I said. “Not with words and not with apology, but with action.”

The words stayed clear.

No confusion.

No softness.

“You’ll rebuild what you allowed to break,” I continued. “And you’ll do it under watch, under order, and without exception.”

They held that.

They didn’t have a choice.

I let the quiet return one last time.

Not to ease them and not to give them space. Only to let the weight settle where it needed to remain. That was where it would stay.

Then I turned back to Isla.

“We’re done here,” I said.

It wasn’t a dismissal of the hall.

It was a statement for her.

She looked at the doors once more, then back at me.

And this time, when she nodded, she moved.

Chapter 94

What remains–1

(Caius)

I didn’t look back when we left the hall. I didn’t need to see them again to know what had been set in place. The doors closed behind us, and the sound carried through the corridor in a way that marked a clear end. My men stayed where they had been positioned, and no one moved to follow.

Isla stayed beside me as we walked. She didn’t rush forward, and she didn’t fall behind, she kept pace without effort. Her hand still held the edge of my cloak, not tight, not uncertain, just there. I didn’t move to take it from her, and I didn’t acknowledge it aloud.

The corridor ahead of us remained clear. Every guard stepped aside before we reached them, lowering their gaze without needing to be told. No one spoke, and no one tried to hold our attention. That silence followed us the entire length of the passage.

We reached the end of the corridor without interruption. The doors leading into the inner wing were already open, and my men stepped back the moment we approached. Isla didn’t hesitate when we crossed through. She didn’t look behind her again.

The space inside was quieter. It wasn’t empty, but it was controlled in a way the hall hadn’t been. This wasn’t a place where voices carried without purpose. It was a place where everything that happened would be chosen.

I led her down the next passage without speaking. There was nothing I needed to say yet, and nothing she needed to answer. The guards at each point shifted as we passed, then fell back into position once we moved through. No one interrupted the path forward.

We reached the chamber I had been using since arriving at Ashcrest. The door was closed, and one of my men stepped forward to open it as we approached, I entered first, then stepped aside enough to let Isla walk in without obstruction. The door closed behind us without a sound.

The room was set as it had been left. Nothing had been moved, nothing disturbed, everything placed with purpose. It wasn’t large, but it didn’t need to be. It held what was required and nothing more.

Isla stopped a few steps inside. She didn’t move further into the room right away. Her gaze moved across the space, taking in each part of it without hurry. She wasn’t searching, she was understanding where she stood now.

I remained near the door for a moment. I gave her the space to move first if she chose to. She didn’t ask for direction, and I didn’t give it. That part belonged to her.

After a moment, she stepped further in. Her hand loosened slightly against my cloak but didn't fall away. She moved toward the center of the room, then stopped again. This time, she looked at me.

"It's quiet," she said.

Her voice didn't break. It didn't carry strain or confusion. It was simply a statement of what she had noticed.

"It is," I answered.

Clam

I–didn't add anything to it. I didn't need to explain the difference between silence and absence. She already understood more than most.

She looked away from me after that. Her gaze moved toward the far wall, then toward the window, then back again. It wasn't restless, it was measured. She was placing herself in the space without needing guidance.

"They're really gone," she said.

She didn't ask it as a question. She said it as something she was confirming for herself. The words settled between us without needing more.

"They are," I said.

I stepped away from the door then. I moved closer, not enough to crowd her, but enough that she didn't have to raise her voice again if she spoke. She didn't step back.

She stood where she was. Her hand finally released the edge of my cloak. It fell back into place without her holding it there.

"I don't know what to do next," she said.

There was no panic in it. No urgency. Just truth.

"You don't have to decide that now," I answered.

She looked at me again. This time there was more focus in her eyes. Not uncertainty, but attention.

Chapter 95

What remains–2

“Ashcrest won’t return to what it was,” I continued. “It answers to me now.” I let that settle before I went on. “Nothing changes here without my order.”

She listened without interrupting. She didn’t look away this time. She held the words where they were given.

“You need to change,” I said. I kept my voice even and didn’t look away. There was nothing more to add to it. It was simple, and it stayed that way.

Her fingers stilled for a moment. Then she looked at me fully, “I don’t have anything,” she said. There was no strain in it.

“You do,” I answered. I turned and walked to the table near the wall. The clothes had been left there earlier, folded and untouched. I picked them up and brought them back.

“Sera left these for you,” I said. I held them out without stepping closer than needed. She looked at them for a moment. Then she reached for them.

Her hand didn’t shake. She took them with care, aware of what she was holding. “Thank you,” she said. I gave a single nod.

“The bathroom is there,” I said. I gestured to the side door. She followed the direction with her eyes. Then she looked back at me.

She didn’t hesitate. She moved past me without needing anything more said. The cloak stayed wrapped around her as she walked. Her steps stayed steady.

She reached the door and opened it. She paused for a moment before stepping inside. Then she closed it behind her. The room settled again.

I stayed where I was. I didn’t move toward the door or leave the space. My attention stayed where it needed to be. Nothing needed to be said.

Water ran for a short time. It didn’t last long. She wasn’t staying in there longer than needed. The sound stopped quickly.

I looked across the room. Nothing had changed, but the meaning had. This space no longer held only command. It now held what came next.

Ashcrest had already begun to shift. The people who had controlled it were no longer in place. What they built wouldn’t hold. What replaced it would be different.

Movement came from the other side of the door. It stayed quiet and contained. Fabric shifted, steps moved across the floor. I didn't interrupt it.

A moment later, the handle turned. The door opened. She stepped back into the room. The cloak was gone.

The clothes fit her well enough. They weren't hers, but they didn't look out of place. She had already settled into them. Her hair was still damp.

Cla

She looked at me. "I'm done," she said. It wasn't an announcement. It was a statement.

"I nodded once. "Good," I said. I didn't add anything more. There was nothing else to say.

She stayed where she was for a moment. Then her gaze moved across the room again. It wasn't searching. It was different now.

"You said nothing changes without your order," she said. She looked back at me. There was no challenge in it.

"Yes," I answered. I held her gaze. She didn't look away.

"And me?" she asked. It wasn't hesitation. It was direct.

"You decide for yourself," I said. I kept my tone even. "You won't be placed again."

I let that settle. "Not by them, not by anyone," I continued. "Not unless you choose it." She took that in without speaking.

She nodded once. Then she moved.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 96

What they will face

(Isla)

I didn't stop when I moved. I didn't look back toward the doors or the hall we had just left. The weight that had followed me for years didn't come with me into this room, and I felt that absence without needing to question it. I walked toward him because that was the only direction that made sense.

He didn’t move when I got closer. He didn’t step forward or reach for me, and he didn’t close the distance I was creating. He stood where he was, watching me without pressure and without expectation. He gave me the space to stop if I chose to.

I didn’t stop.

I stepped into him and wrapped my arms around him without hesitation. The contact was solid, real in a way nothing else had felt before, and I held onto that without pulling away. My body settled against his, not out of need but out of choice.

For a moment, he didn’t move.

Then he did.

His arms came around me, firm and controlled, not pulling me closer than I had chosen but not leaving distance either. He held me without taking anything from me, and that difference settled deeper than anything else had today. I felt it in the way my breathing stayed even and unforced.

“Thank you,” I said.

My voice didn’t break, and it didn’t need to. The words were simple, but they carried everything I didn’t say out loud. I didn’t need to explain it, and he didn’t need me to.

His hold didn’t change when I spoke. It stayed steady, like he understood that the moment didn’t need anything more. I felt the consistency of him, grounded and unmoving, not reacting and not pulling away. It gave me something to stand on without asking for it.

I stayed where I was.

I didn’t pull back.

I stayed close, my hands still on him as I looked up.

His gaze was already on me. Not past me and not through me, but directly where it belonged. It didn’t press or demand, but it didn’t give me space to pretend it wasn’t there either.

I didn’t look away.

Something in me shifted into place. It wasn’t fear and it wasn’t uncertainty. It was something that had been buried too long and no longer needed to stay that way.

I reached for him.

My hand moved with purpose, and I pulled him down toward me without hesitation. He didn't resist the movement, and he didn't take control of it. He let me decide where it happened.

kissed him.

It wasn't uncertain, and it wasn't new. It was a choice I made fully aware of what it meant and what I was giving. The contact settled instantly, familiar in a way I didn't need to question.

He answered it.

His response came firm and controlled, meeting mine without pushing beyond it. There was no hesitation in it this time, and no space where either of us needed to figure anything out. It held between us, balanced and deliberate.

I felt it more clearly now.

Not just the contact, but everything behind it. The pull that had been there before hadn't disappeared, but it wasn't something I was trying to understand anymore. It was something I accepted.

I pulled back first.

Not abruptly and not with uncertainty. I let the space return at my pace, keeping control of where the moment ended. My hands stayed on him for a second longer before they finally loosened.

He didn't move away.

He stayed where he was, his gaze still on me, unchanged by what had just happened. There wasn't any question in it, and there wasn't any expectation. It remained steady, the same way it had been from the beginning.

My breathing stayed even.

It didn't catch or break. Nothing in me felt out of place or pulled in a direction I didn't choose. Everything stayed where I placed it.

That mattered.

"I want to see them," I said.

The words came without hesitation. I didn't need to think about them before I said them. They had already settled into place before I spoke them out loud.

His gaze didn’t shift.

“Before we leave,” I added.

I held his eyes as I said it. I didn’t need to explain what I meant. He understood it the moment the words were said.

“They already know what I am,” I continued.

That part didn’t matter anymore. It wasn’t something I needed to prove. It wasn’t something I needed them to accept.

“I want them to feel it.”

The room stayed quiet after that.

Claim

It didn’t feel empty. It held what had been said without needing anything added to it. Nothing shifted under The weight of it.

He didn’t answer right away.

He watched me for a moment longer, like he was measuring something that didn’t need to be spoken. I didn’t look away while he did. I didn’t step back from what I had just asked for.

“You’ll have it,” he said.

That was all.

No hesitation.

No question.

No change in tone.

It settled into place the same way everything else had today, final and unmoving. There wasn’t anything added to it, and nothing needed to be.

That was enough.

I didn’t speak again.

I didn’t need to.

The decision had already been made, and it didn’t shift once it was set. I felt it settle fully into place.

I stayed close.

Not because I needed to hold onto him, but because I chose to. My hands remained where they were, resting against him without tension. Nothing in me pulled away.

He didn’t move me.

He didn’t step back.

His arms came around me again, controlled and certain, holding me without taking anything from me. It stayed balanced, exactly the way it needed to be.

I let my eyes close for a moment.

Not to escape anything.

Not to avoid what came next.

Just to hold this where it was.

When I opened them again, nothing had changed.

And that was the difference.

I didn’t need anything else.

What came next was already decided.

And this time, it would be by me.

Somments

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 97

Power without command–1

(Isla)

We didn’t speak when we left the room. Caius didn’t ask if I was sure, and I didn’t need him to. The decision had already settled inside me, quiet and firm. I wanted to see them where they had been taken.

The corridor opened ahead of us, and the guards moved before we reached them. Their heads lowered faster than before, not only for Caius this time. Nelt the difference in the way their bodies reacted, in the way their eyes dropped before they could fully meet mine. Something in me noticed without needing to question it.

Caius walked beside me, not in front of me. He didn’t guide me with his hand or pull me in any direction. He simply moved with me, and that made the path feel like mine too. I held my head up because lowering it no longer felt natural.

The inner wing changed as we went deeper. The walls grew thicker, the doors heavier, and the air carried the scent of iron, stone, and fear. This wasn’t the hall where judgment had been spoken in front of everyone. This was where judgment became real.

Two guards stood before a narrow stairwell at the end of the passage. They stepped aside the moment Caius approached, but their attention moved to me before they lowered their heads. One of them swallowed hard, like he had felt something before I had done anything at all. I didn’t stop to look at him.

We went down.

The steps were cold beneath my feet, but the cold didn’t reach me the way it once would have. I could feel the shape of the place before we reached the bottom, could feel the bodies below, the fear held behind doors and iron. Vaela stirred inside me, quiet but present. She didn’t push forward.

‘They’re here,’ she said.

‘I know,’ I answered.

Her presence warmed through me, not wild and not demanding. It sat beneath my skin like strength that had been waiting for me to stop denying it. I didn’t feel alone with her there. I didn’t feel small with Caius beside me either.

At the bottom of the stairs, another door waited. it was guarded by four of Caius’s men, all standing with weapons ready and eyes sharp. When they saw us, they moved as one, opening the way without question. The door groaned softly as it moved inward.

The holding chambers stretched ahead.

The space was long and narrow, lined with separate cells on both sides. Torches burned along the walls, throwing light over iron bars and stone floors. It wasn’t loud inside, but it wasn’t peaceful either. Fear had a sound even when no one spoke.

I stepped through first.

Caius let me.

That was the first thing I understood.

Clam

He could have entered before me, could have filled the space with his title and command before I had a chance to breathe. He didn't. He gave me the first step into the room where they were waiting.

The reaction came before anyone spoke.

A guard lowered his head so quickly his chin nearly touched his chest. Another shifted back a step, then caught himself and went still. Somewhere down the row, someone drew in a breath too fast. The sound ended before it became anything else.

I kept walking.

The first cell held Rodan.

He stood near the back wall, wrists bound, shoulders tense, face turned toward the bars. His eyes found Caius first out of habit, but they didn't stay there. The moment they moved to me, something in his face changed.

It wasn't disbelief this time.

It was recognition.

Not of me as the girl he had ordered to the ground. Not of me as the one he had named worthless in front of his pack. He was looking at what stood in front of him now, and whatever pride he still carried couldn't hold its shape under it. His gaze dropped.

I didn't stop.

Maren was in the next cell.

She sat on the narrow bench against the wall, her hands folded too tightly in her lap. When I passed, her head lifted, and for one second the old mask tried to return. It failed before it settled. Her eyes lowered without anyone telling her to.

LUC

Chapter 98

Power without command–2

The sight of it should have felt impossible.

It didn’t.

It felt correct.

I moved past her without speaking.

Torvin stood in the third cell, and that was where my steps slowed. His hands were bound in front of him, and for the first time since I had known him, he wasn’t the one holding the key. He looked smaller without purpose in his hands. Without the chain, without the gloves, without the permission to touch what could hurt me.

My ankle remembered him.

Not with pain now.

With truth.

The place where the wolfsbane chain had sat no longer burned, but memory still knew the shape of it. I remembered the click of metal, the gloves over his hands, the way he never looked at me like I was a person. He looked at me now.

He tried to hold my gaze.

He failed.

Vaela moved inside me, calm and ancient, and the space around me seemed to answer her. Torvin’s knees bent slightly before he caught himself against the wall. His breathing changed, quick and rough, but he didn’t speak. I kept walking.

Brent was next.

He was standing when I reached him, but he didn’t look like he wanted to be. His hands were chained, his face pale, his mouth pressed tight as if words were trapped behind it. When he saw me, the old anger tried to rise. It died before it reached his eyes.

I stopped then.

Not because he deserved it.

Because I chose to.

The chamber changed around that choice. The guards seemed to feel it, and the prisoners did too. Even Caius stopped beside me without saying a word. He didn't interrupt the moment.

Brent's throat moved.

He didn't speak.

He didn't get to.

Clan

Hooked at him and telt nothing like fear. I remembered his hand, his foot, his laugh, the way he had enjoyed being stronger when he thought strength meant no one would ever answer for it. Now he stood behind bars, unable to look at me for more than a breath. That was answer enough for now.

I moved on.

Derek was farther down.

He sat on the floor instead of the bench, his back against the wall, his head lowered. He didn't rise when I came close. He didn't call my name this time. Maybe he had learned that my name was no longer something he could use to reach me.

I stopped outside his cell too.

He lifted his head slowly, and the sight of me seemed to take what little strength he had left. His lips. parted, but no sound came. The man who had once looked through me now looked at me like I was something he couldn't survive seeing clearly. I let him look.

I didn't tremble.

I didn't shrink.

I didn't search his face for apology.

The need for that had been buried with the version of me that had waited for him to choose me. He hadn't. He wouldn't have. That truth didn't hurt the same way anymore.

Helene was in the next cell with Vera and Cole.

My mother looked at me first, then away, then back again because looking away didn't save her this time. Vera cried silently, one hand pressed against her mouth. Cole stood behind them, his face pale but controlled, as if even now he was trying to decide the safest way to exist. None of them spoke.

Good.

I didn’t come here for their words.

I came here for this.

I stood in the center of the holding chamber and let myself settle. Not rush. Not react. Not give them anything before I chose to. The power inside me didn’t rise like anger. It unfolded.

The first bow came from a guard.

Then another.

Then the prisoners felt it fully.

Rodan lowered first, not by choice, not completely. His knees bent as if his body had reached a truth his pride couldn’t outrun. Maren gripped the edge of the bench, but her head lowered anyway. Torvin slid down the wall until one knee touched stone.

Brent fought it the longest.

I watched him try.

Claim

His jaw tightened, his shoulders locked, and his hands curled inside the chains. Then his knees hit the Toor. The sound carried through the chamber. He didrit look up after that.

Derek lowered his head until his forehead almost touched his bound hands. Helene folded in on herself beside Vera, and Cole bowed last, slow and stiff, but bowed all the same. No command had been given. No one had told them what to do.

I hadn’t spoken.

Caius stayed beside me, silent.

That made the moment heavier.

He didn’t need to prove that this was mine.

He allready knew.

I drew in a breath and let it leave me slowly. The chamber held me differently now, not as a place of fear, not as somewhere I had been brought. I had walked here. I had chosen it. And they had felt what that choice meant.

Vaela’s voice moved through me.

‘They understand.’

I looked across the cells, across lowered heads and broken pride, across all the things that had once stood over me. My hands stayed relaxed at my sides. My breathing stayed calm. My voice didn’t come yet, because it didn’t need to.

Not here.

Not yet.

For the first time, they were the ones waiting.

And I was the one who would decide when to speak.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 99

No more mercy

(Isla)

I didn’t rush to speak.

They were already where they needed to be, lowered without command, held there by something they couldn’t fight. The weight in the chamber stayed steady, not shifting, not breaking. I let it sit long enough. for them to feel it fully.

Then I spoke.

“You don’t speak unless I allow it,” I said.

My voice didn’t rise, and it didn’t need to. It carried through the chamber without effort, settling into the space they had left open. No one moved against it.

Derek tried anyway.

“Isla,” he said, his voice breaking before he could steady it. “Please, just listen to me.”

“No,” I said.

The word stopped him before anything else could follow. He froze where he was, still lowered, still unable to lift his head fully. This time, I was the one who ended it.

“You don’t get to use my name,” I said.

My gaze stayed on him, not shifting away, not softening. The silence after that pressed harder than anything he had said. He lowered his head further.

“You had years to speak,” I continued. “You had time to see what was happening and choose something different.” My voice stayed even. “You didn’t.”

He didn’t answer.

He couldn’t.

Maren tried next.

“Please,” she said, her voice unsteady, her hands gripping the bench beneath her. “I did what I had to do to keep order.”

I turned my head slightly.

“You don’t speak to me either,” I said.

Her mouth closed instantly.

“You chose position,” I continued. “You chose control, and you chose to keep it even when you knew what it cost.” My gaze held hers for a moment before she dropped it again. “That wasn’t order.”

She didn’t try again.

Clairy

Redan didn’t speak.

“He stayed lowered, his hands tight, his body rigid as if he could still hold something together by force. I looked at him without moving closer.

“You built this,” I said.

My voice stayed calm, not raised, not sharpened. It didn’t need to be. “You led it, and you allowed it to stand.”

He didn’t look up.

“It ends with you,” I finished.

Torvin shifted against the wall.

The movement was small, but I felt it before I saw it. His breathing changed, uneven, like he was trying to prepare himself to say something. I stepped closer to his cell.

He froze.

“You don’t speak,” I said.

The words reached him before he could open his mouth. His shoulders tightened, then dropped again when he realized he couldn’t push past it. I held his gaze for a second longer than I had with the others.

“You knew exactly what you were doing,” I said.

My voice didn’t change.

“You measured it,” I continued. “You controlled it, and you repeated it because you could.”

His head lowered.

Not slowly.

Not carefully.

It dropped like something had forced it down. I didn’t need to say anything about the chain.

He remembered it.

Brent moved next.

It wasn’t a full movement, just enough to show that something in him hadn’t settled the same way as the others. His head lifted slightly, not fully, not enough to meet my eyes.

“Isla,” he said.

I stepped closer.

“You don’t speak my name,” I said.

He stopped.

The words didn’t come again. His jaw tightened, but it didn’t change anything. I looked at him without

Claint looking away.

“You didn’t follow anyone,” I said.

My voice stayed level.

“You made your own choices, and you enjoyed them.” I let that sit for a second before continuing. “That’s what you answer for.”

His head dropped again.

This time, it stayed there.

I stepped back.

The chamber didn’t shift the way it had before. It stayed where I had placed it, steady and unmoving. No one tried to speak again.

Good.

I let my gaze move across all of them.

Not quickly.

Not skipping.

Each of them felt it again, not as something new, but as something that hadn’t left. They stayed lowered without being told.

“You already asked for mercy,” I said.

My voice carried through the space without effort. It didn’t soften, and it didn’t rise. It stayed exactly where I placed it.

“You asked when you thought you still had something to offer,” I continued. “You don’t.”

No one answered.

No one tried.

“There’s nothing you can say now that changes anything,” I said. “There’s nothing you can offer that hasn’t already been taken from you.”

I didn’t need to say more.

They understood.

I let the silence return.

Not the kind they had used before. Not the kind that protected them. This one stayed where it belonged, holding them in place instead of hiding them.

I turned away.

I didn’t wait for a response. I didn’t need to see anything else from them. What had needed to be said had

Claun already been given.

“Caius moved when I did.

He didn’t step in front of me. He didn’t reach for me. He followed beside me, the same way he had walked

We left the chamber without looking back.

The guards moved immediately, closing the space behind us. The door shut with a heavy sound that carried through the corridor. It didn’t echo the way it would have before.

It settled.

We walked back up the stairs.

The air changed again as we moved away from the cells. It lost the weight of fear, but it didn’t return to what it had been before. Something had shifted too far for that.

I didn’t speak.

I didn’t need to.

Vaela stirred again, quieter this time.

‘It’s done, she said.

I didn’t answer her out loud.

I didn’t need to..

The corridor opened ahead of us again, guards stepping aside, heads lowered. The path felt different now, not something I was being led through, but something I walked by choice.

I stopped once we reached the end of it.

Caius stopped with me.

I turned to him.

He didn’t ask what I needed. He didn’t question what I had done. He looked at me the same way he had before, steady and unchanged.

“That’s all they get,” I said.

My voice stayed even.

“No more,” I added.

He held my gaze.

“Understood,” he said.

That was enough.

I turned forward again.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 100

No longer invisible-1

(Isla)

The air outside the holding chambers felt different once the door closed behind us. It didn’t carry their voices anymore, and it didn’t press against my skin the same way. I walked beside Caius without looking back. For once, I didn’t feel dragged toward what I had left behind.

The guards at the top of the stairs moved before we reached them. Their heads lowered faster than before, not only for Caius this time. I noticed the way their eyes dropped before they could fully meet mine. Something in me recognized the difference immediately.

Caius didn’t ask if I was alright. I was grateful for that because I didn’t know what answer I would have given. I wasn’t falling apart, but I wasn’t untouched either. Everything inside me still felt too new to place properly.

We reached the upper corridor, and the sounds of Ashcrest returned in pieces. Footsteps slowed when we came close, voices lowered, and bodies shifted out of the way. It wasn’t the silence from before, the kind that had always hidden fear and obedience. This one came from people finally understanding they could no longer look away from what they had allowed.

Two warriors stood near the entrance to the outer hall. One of them went still the second our eyes met. I remembered his face because he had passed the shack more than once and never once questioned why I was locked inside it. Now he lowered his head immediately.

I kept walking.

I didn’t need to stop for him. I didn’t need him to explain himself or pretend he regretted it now. His body had already answered for him. That was enough.

Caius stayed beside me without interrupting my thoughts. He didn’t tell me to let things go, and he didn’t tell me that it was over. Maybe some things didn’t end all at once. Maybe they ended slowly, piece by piece, until one day they stopped following you entirely.

We stepped outside, and the pack grounds opened around us, Ashcrest looked mostly the same, clean paths, swept yards, and buildings kept in order because wolves had always been made to maintain them. That was what made it worse. The place had known how to look proper while hiding what it had done to

Pack members noticed us almost immediately. A woman carrying folded linens stopped near the side path, then lowered her head and stepped back. Two younger wolves near the training yard straightened before quickly looking away. Even the older wolves moved aside without needing to be told.

I felt it again.

Not fear alone.

Recognition.

Vaela stirred beneath my skin, quiet but awake. She didn’t push forward or flood me with emotion. She simply watched through me, aware of every reaction around us. I let her.

Clas

They feel us, she said,

I know, I answered.

The words stayed inside me, but they settled heavily there. I looked across the grounds at the pack that had once acted like I was invisible. Now they noticed every step I took. That should have felt unreal, but it didn't.

"You're watching everything," Caius said.

I looked at him. "I don't know how not to."

His gaze moved across the grounds once before returning to me. "You learned to survive by noticing things other people ignored." He said it simply, without pity or softness. "That doesn't disappear overnight.

I looked away first, not because I couldn't hold his gaze, but because there was too much understanding in it. I had spent years being watched for mistakes. Being seen without judgment still felt unfamiliar.

We continued down the main path together. The training yard had been swept, and the pack house windows had been cleaned for Caius's arrival before everything fell apart. I remembered scrubbing floors until my back burned and carrying buckets with hands that shook from hunger. Clean didn't mean good.

Ashcrest had always cared about appearances. The halls had to shine, the tables had to be set properly, and the grounds had to look welcoming for visitors. My shack had been far enough away that no important guest needed to see it. That had been the point.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 101

No longer invisible–2

My steps slowed before fully realized why.

The far edge of the territory sat beyond the trees, separated from the parts of the pack anyone cared about. The shack wasn't there anymore. Only the empty stretch remained, the place where years of my life had once been trapped behind rotting walls and wolfsbane.

I didn't ask to go there.

Not yet.

Part of me wanted to see the empty space for myself. Another part didn't want to stand there and remember how many nights I had believed I would die inside that place. I stayed where I was.

Caius noticed the direction of my gaze. He didn't ask what I was thinking, and he didn't tell me what I should do. He simply stayed beside me. Somehow that made the choice easier.

"It still feels strange," I said quietly.

His attention shifted fully to me. "What does?"

I looked across the grounds again. "Nobody's stopping me." My fingers curled slightly at my sides before loosening again. "I keep waiting for someone to tell me where I'm allowed to stand."

No amusement crossed his face.

No disbelief either.

"You spent years being controlled," he said. "Your body learned to expect it."

I'swallowed once. "Part of me still does."

His eyes stayed on mine for a moment. "That part will learn something different."

The certainty in his voice settled deeper than I expected. He didn't say it like comfort. He said it like fact. Somehow that made me believe it more.

We walked again after that. Royal guards had taken positions around the grounds, and Ashcrest wolves kept their distance as if the shape of the territory itself had changed. Maybe it had. Maybe power changed places faster than people did.

I watched a few pack members lower their heads as we passed. Some of them had ignored me for years. Others had watched openly when punishments happened in the yard. Now none of them could hold my gaze for more than a second.

"It still doesn't feel real," I admitted.

Caius looked at me. "What part?"

"That they're afraid of me now."

The words sounded strange even after I said them. Fear had always belonged to me before. I had carried it every day for so long that I didn't know how to stand outside of it completely.

They aren’t only afraid,” Caius said.

I waited.

“They recognize authority, he continued. “Their instincts answer to it before their minds do.”

Vaela shifted softly inside me at his words. I felt her presence spread warmth beneath my skin, calm and powerful without needing to force itself outward. She didn’t feel uncertain. She never had.

‘I told you,‘ she said quietly.

I breathed out slowly.

We reached the side of the pack house where the path widened and the noise of the grounds softened around us. No one stood close enough to interrupt. The distance the pack kept no longer felt like rejection. This time it felt like respect mixed with fear, and I still didn’t fully know what to do with either.

“My whole life was decided for me,” I said after a moment.

Caius turned his attention fully toward me without speaking. He didn’t rush to answer or fill the silence before I was finished. He waited.

“What I wore, where I slept, when I ate, when I worked,” I continued. “Even pain wasn’t mine to choose.” I looked down at my hands briefly before lifting my eyes again. “Now nobody’s ordering me anywhere, and I don’t know how to stop expecting it.”

“You don’t need to figure it out all at once,” he said.

I held his gaze quietly.

“You survived by adapting to what was done to you,” he continued. “Learning something different will take time.” His voice stayed calm. “No one is taking that time away from you.”

Something tightened in my chest then loosened just as quickly. It didn’t hurt. It felt more like something opening after being shut for too long. I didn’t fully understand it yet.

Vaela moved gently beneath my skin.

‘We choose now, she said.

I closed my eyes for one brief moment and let the words settle. Then I looked back at Caius. “Yes,” I answered softly, more to myself than anyone else. “We do.”

His expression didn’t change much, but something in his gaze deepened slightly. He heard the difference in my voice even if I didn’t explain it aloud. He didn’t ask me to.

We stood there while Ashcrest continued moving around us differently than it ever had before. The paths were still clean, the pack house still stood, and the grounds still looked orderly from a distance. But none of it held me beneath it anymore.

For the first time in my life, I wasn’t waiting to be summoned.

I wasn’t waiting to be punished.

I wasn’t waiting to disappear quietly so everyone else could stay comfortable.

Istood in the middle of Ashcrest without lowering my eyes.

-And this time, I belonged to myself.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 102

Every step notice–1

Every step notice–1

(Caius)

Ashcrest watched her differently now.

I noticed it the moment we stepped further across the grounds. Wolves who had once ignored her entirely now reacted before she even reached them. Heads lowered. Bodies shifted aside. Conversations stopped halfway through and didn’t begin again until we passed.

She noticed every part of it.

I could see it in the way her eyes moved across the territory, catching reactions most people would’ve missed completely. Years of surviving this place had taught her to watch everything around her before it had the chance to turn against her. That instinct hadn’t left her simply because the balance of power had changed.

We walked beside each other without rushing.

I didn't move ahead of her and I didn't guide her path. This wasn't a moment where she needed someone leading her from place to place. She needed space to stand inside what had changed.

A pair of warriors crossed near the lower path ahead of us. The second they realized who stood there, both of them stopped immediately. One lowered his head so quickly it almost looked painful.

Isla saw it too.

"They don't even think before they do it now," she said quietly.

"Their wolves do," I answered.

Her gaze moved across the grounds again after that. "I spent years trying not to be noticed here."

The words settled heavily between us.

"And now they notice every step," I said.

She stayed quiet for a moment.

"I don't know what to do with that yet," she admitted.

There was no shame in the words. Just honesty. She wasn't pretending this adjustment came easily to her, and I respected that more than false confidence.

"You don't need to know yet," I said.

She looked at me briefly before her attention returned to the path ahead. Her movements still carried awareness in every step, the habit of someone who expected correction if she moved the wrong way or stood in the wrong place too long. Even now, after everything that had happened, part of her still waited for someone to take control back from her.

That part would take time.

The grounds remained orderly around us. The paths had been swept clean for my arrival, and the pack house windows reflected the afternoon light without a streak left on them. Ashcrest had always known how to maintain appearances when it mattered.

Isla knew that better than anyone.

I saw her eyes move toward the training yard briefly before shifting away again. She remembered these grounds differently than the wolves standing around us did. They saw a functioning pack. She saw every punishment tied to it.

Her pace slowed slightly as we reached the center path.

I followed her gaze toward the far edge of the territory where the shack had once stood. Nothing remained there now except open ground and the beginning of the trees beyond it. Most wolves passing through the territory probably wouldn't have looked twice at the empty stretch.

She did.

Her expression didn't change much, but something in her attention tightened for a moment before settling again. She didn't ask to walk there. She didn't speak about it either.

I let the silence remain.

There was no reason to force her toward memories she wasn't ready to stand inside yet. Some things were faced directly. Others had to be approached when the person carrying them chose to do it.

A few younger wolves stepped aside ahead of us near the side path. One of them glanced toward Isla before lowering his eyes immediately. Fear sat clearly on him, but there was something else beneath it too.

Respect.

Not the earned kind yet. Not fully. The instinctive kind wolves gave something stronger than

Every step notice–1 themselves before they understood why they were doing it.

Vorek stirred beneath my skin once.

'Better.'

I ignored him.

Mostly.

Isla glanced toward me again. "You're quiet."

"I'm watching."

“What?”

I looked across the grounds once before answering. “How differently they behave around you now.”

She held that for a second.

“They hated me before,” she said.

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Chapter 103

“No,” I answered calmly. “Most of them accepted what was done to you because it was easier than questioning it.”

Her gaze lowered briefly after that.

“Some enjoyed it,” she said quietly.

I didn’t argue with her.

Brent had enjoyed it. Torvin had enjoyed parts of it too. Others had simply allowed it because Ashcrest had taught them obedience mattered more than conscience. None of that changed the reality standing beside me now.

“They won’t make that mistake again,” I said.

Her eyes lifted toward mine slowly. There was still adjustment in her expression whenever I said things like that, like part of her expected promises to disappear the moment she reached for them. I understood why.

We continued walking without hurrying.

The further we moved through the territory, the more the pack reacted. Wolves lowered themselves out of instinct now. Not fully to their knees, not like the holding chambers earlier, but enough to show submission before they even realized they were doing it.

Isla noticed every single one.

“They’re afraid,” she said.

“They should be careful,” I corrected.

That pulled her attention back toward me fully.

“There’s a difference.”

She studied my face for a moment after that like she was trying to decide exactly what I meant. I let her take the time to think about it.

“Fear fades quickly,” I continued. “Respect lasts longer.”

“And what do they feel now?”

“Both.”

Every step notice–2

She absorbed that quietly.

A breeze moved across the grounds, carrying the scent of pine and cold air through the territory. It shifted strands of Isla’s hair lightly around her face before settling again. Her attention moved across Ashcrest once more, slower this time.

Not searching for danger.

Understanding.

“My whole life happened here,” she said after a while. “Every part of it.”

I listened without interrupting.

“I used to think I’d die here too.”

Her voice stayed calm when she said it. That made the words land harder than if emotion had broken through them. She wasn’t trying to gain sympathy from the truth. She was simply saying it aloud.

“You won’t,” I answered.

Her eyes shifted toward me again.

There wasn’t any hesitation in my voice because there wasn’t any hesitation in the reality of it. That future no longer existed for her. The moment I walked into that shack, Ashcrest lost any right to decide how her life ended.

I felt Isla breathe in slowly beside me.

Something about the grounds had changed for her already. I could see it in the way she walked now. The hesitation wasn't gone completely, but it no longer controlled every movement she made.

That mattered.

We reached the side of the pack house where the noise of the territory softened slightly around us. No one stood close enough to interrupt. Royal guards remained stationed throughout the grounds while Ashcrest wolves kept their distance carefully.

Isla looked toward the open stretch of land ahead of us.

"For years I thought surviving was the only thing I was allowed to do," she said quietly.

I stayed silent.

"Now I don't know what comes after surviving."

I looked at her fully then.

"Living," I said.

She went still beside me for a moment after that.

Not frozen. Not frightened. Just still in the way people became still when words reached somewhere deeper than expected.

I watched Isla look across Ashcrest one more time, across the paths she'd cleaned, the grounds she'd worked on, and the wolves who no longer dared pretend she didn't exist.

This territory had spent years trying to break her into something smaller.

Instead, it had become the place where a Celestial wolf finally stood in her full power.

And every wolf in Ashcrest felt the difference now.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 104

Isla stayed quiet beside me after that.

Not distant.

Not closed off.

She was thinking, and I could see it in the way her attention moved across Ashcrest now. The territory no longer looked at her the same way, and part of her was still adjusting to what that meant.

We continued down the main path together.

Royal guards remained stationed across the grounds while Ashcrest wolves moved carefully around them. Two guards stood near the western entrance checking movement between the lower grounds and the pack house while another group rotated near the holding wing beneath the eastern corridor.

Nobody ignored the guards.

That alone told the pack enough.

Ashcrest no longer belonged to itself.

A few wolves stopped talking when Isla passed them near the training yard. One lowered his head immediately while another stepped aside so fast he nearly walked directly into a water barrel beside the path.

Isla noticed both reactions.

“They’re nervous,” she said quietly.

“They should be.”

Her eyes shifted toward me briefly before returning forward again.

The farther we walked, the more the territory adjusted around her naturally. Wolves moved out of her path before she reached them. Others straightened the second they realized she was nearby. Even the servants crossing between buildings lowered their heads respectfully now instead of pretending she didn’t exist.

That part held her attention the longest.

What the pack feels now

I noticed it when an older she wolf stepped out of the kitchens carrying folded cloths against her chest. The second she saw Isla, she stopped immediately before lowering her head carefully.

“My Lady,” she said softly.

The woman looked nervous about saying the wrong thing.

Isla slowed slightly.

Not because she expected disrespect.

Because she still wasn't used to this.

The older wolf waited quietly while Isla looked at her. I recognized her vaguely from the pack house kitchens earlier. Low rank. Quiet. The kind of wolf most people overlooked unless they needed something done.

She looked close to trembling now.

Not from Isla herself.

From uncertainty.

Everyone in Ashcrest understood the territory had changed hands. Nobody knew exactly where they stood anymore.

"You can go," Isla said gently.

Relief crossed the woman's face instantly.

"Thank you, My Lady."

She hurried off after that.

Isla watched her leave before speaking quietly beside me.

"She used to leave extra food near the back kitchens for me sometimes."

My attention shifted toward her fully.

"She wasn't supposed to," Isla continued. "Most nights she waited until no one was watching first."

I looked toward the kitchens briefly.

Not every wolf in Ashcrest had participated equally.

I already knew that.

But hearing Isla say it mattered.

“She risked punishment for that,” I said.

“Yes.”

The answer came softly.

We continued walking after that without hurrying.

The afternoon air carried colder now, moving across the grounds while wolves kept their distance carefully around us. I watched Isla take everything in differently than before.

Not like prey anymore.

Like someone trying to understand what standing freely inside a place felt like.

A royal guard approached from the eastern side of the grounds before stopping several feet away. His attention shifted toward Isla first before lowering respectfully.

“My Lady,” he said. “The southern gates have been secured.”

Isla blinked once.

Again that slight pause.

Not weakness.

Adjustment.

“No one enters or leaves Ashcrest now without royal approval,” the guard continued. ” Additional patrols have been placed along the outer borders.”

She looked toward the southern side of the territory instinctively after hearing it.

“Good,” she answered quietly.

The guard nodded once before stepping back immediately.

I watched the moment settle around her afterward.

Not fear.

Not shock.

Realization.

What the pack feels now

The guards weren't waiting for my instructions first anymore in moments involving Ashcrest directly. They were recognizing her position beside me naturally now.

And the territory noticed it too.

A pair of Ashcrest warriors standing near the storage hall lowered their heads the second the guard addressed Isla formally. One of them looked uncomfortable enough that he avoided looking in her direction entirely afterward.

Good.

He should've been uncomfortable.

"You noticed that," I said.

Isla glanced toward me slightly. "What?"

"The guards."

Her gaze moved briefly toward the patrol near the southern path again.

"They ask me things now," she said quietly.

"Yes."

Another pause settled between us.

"I still expect someone to correct them for it."

Nobody would.

That part of her still belonged to the girl trapped in the shack waiting to be told she'd stepped somewhere she shouldn't have. The territory around us was changing faster than that instinct inside her could keep up with.

"That won't happen," I said calmly.

Her eyes lifted toward mine.

There was no uncertainty in my voice because there was no uncertainty in the reality of it. Nobody inside Ashcrest would ever reduce her back into what she'd been before.

Not while I breathed.

The thought settled heavily between us without needing to be spoken aloud directly.

We reached the upper courtyard near the center of the territory then. Wolves crossing through the grounds slowed immediately when they saw Isla beside me. Several lowered themselves instinctively before continuing on.

Not dramatically.

Naturally.

That difference mattered.

One younger wolf near the far staircase looked up too late and froze completely when his eyes met Isla's. Fear crossed his face first before he lowered his head sharply.

Isla watched him carefully for a moment.

Then she kept walking.

No hesitation.

No shrinking.

No lowering her own eyes to make others comfortable anymore.

I realized the territory was beginning to understand something important.

Isla didn't need to force authority onto them.

They were already giving it to her willingly.

The change spread through Ashcrest with every step she took.

Not forced.

Not demanded.

The pack simply reacted to her now. Wolves moved aside without thinking about it first. Guards listened the moment she spoke. Even the older warriors who once looked through her entirely no longer held her gaze for long.

Isla noticed it all.

I could see the awareness settling deeper inside her little by little. Not confidence yet. Something quieter than that. Understanding.

The girl who had once survived this territory by staying invisible was gone.

And the wolves of Ashcrest were beginning to understand that she would never belong beneath them again.

The Alpha King And His Chosen Luna

Chapter 105

Practice and instinct–1

(Caius)

The wolves of Ashcrest were beginning to understand that she would never belong beneath them again. I watched the realization move through the territory little by little while we crossed the courtyard together. Nobody looked through her anymore. Nobody acted like she could be pushed aside or forgotten. Good. That was how it should've been from the beginning.

Isla stayed quiet beside me for several more moments before finally speaking. "I want to practice shifting."

My attention shifted toward her fully. "Practice?"

She nodded once. "I don't want it to hurt every time."

"It won't," I said quietly.

Her eyes searched mine for a moment. "I know the first time was hard," I continued. "But your wolf's awake now." I held her gaze calmly. "It'll get easier."

Some of the tension left her body after that. "Come with me," I said.

She followed without hesitation.

We left the main grounds behind slowly after that, moving past the lower paths and toward the eastern side of Ashcrest where the forest stretched thicker beyond the territory. Royal guards noticed us leaving immediately, but none followed. The farther we walked, the quieter everything became. Voices disappeared first. Then footsteps. Soon the only sounds left were the trees moving around us and the stream running somewhere deeper through the forest ahead.

Isla stayed beside me the entire walk. Not tense anymore. Thinking. The afternoon air carried cold beneath the trees while sunlight broke through branches overhead in scattered pieces. The pack house felt farther away out here. Good. She needed that right now.

“This used to be part of the training grounds?” she asked quietly once the clearing came into view.

“Yes.”

The clearing sat near the stream with enough space between the trees for shifting safely. The forest stretched wider there, leaving enough open ground between the trees for wolves to run without crashing through heavy brush. From the lack of scent and disturbed earth it

Practice and instinct–1 was clear the area hadn’t been used much recently.

Isla looked around slowly before turning back toward me. “No one comes here?”

“Not often.”

Relief crossed her face briefly. I stepped closer toward her. “You don’t need to force the shift.”

“I know.”

“Just let your wolf come forward naturally.”

She nodded once. Then she closed her eyes.

The air changed almost immediately afterward. Power moved beneath her skin while silver passed through her eyes for a brief moment. I watched her breathing slow little by little until the shift finally happened naturally. No scream. No collapse. No pain. One second Isla stood in front of me. The next her wolf stood there instead.

Pale fur caught the sunlight breaking through the trees, somewhere between moonlight and ash. Silver eyes stayed fixed directly on me while cold air moved through the thick fur around her neck. She was something I had no adequate words for standing there in the clearing light.

Vorak stirred heavily beneath my skin.

‘Mate.‘

I shifted seconds later.

The forest sharpened around us after that. Water. Pine. Earth. Isla. Her wolf moved first, fast, darting deeper between the trees before circling back toward Vorak again, almost playful despite herself. I followed immediately while the two wolves disappeared further into the forest together. Branches cracked beneath us while we ran.

This version of Isla felt different. Out here she wasn't trapped inside fear or survival. She was free. And she was beginning to understand what that freedom felt like. The difference was visible in every movement she made, the way she pushed ahead without hesitating, the way she turned back toward me not out of fear but out of choice.

We ran deeper through the forest for what felt like hours. Her wolf grew more confident with every turn through the trees. Faster too. Sometimes she pushed ahead before circling back toward Vorak again like she wanted reassurance he was still there beside her. He always was. By the time we returned toward the clearing, the sun had shifted lower through the branches overhead and Isla's wolf looked calmer than before. Happier.

We shifted back near the stream.

Then Isla froze instantly.

I followed her gaze toward the opposite side of the clearing where we'd left the clothes before shifting. Too far. A soft sound left her before she crossed her arms quickly over herself. The movement wasn't about nakedness itself. I recognised that immediately. It was the marks. Her shoulders turned slightly away from me automatically after that, hiding the scars along her back before she probably even realised she was doing it.