

## Alpha Amanda's love adventure novel

Chapter 151 The First Slice Amanda's POV: "Amanda." A familiar voice called out, and I immediately recognized it-it was Derrick. +30 Free Coins I turned around in surprise, and sure enough, there stood Derrick, wearing an eagle-shaped silver mask just a few feet away. Even with the mask covering most of his face, I could still picture that persistent gleam of amusement in his eyes. Ever since he'd confessed his feelings and I'd gently rejected him, I had deliberately avoided him at the training camp and the castle.

But I never expected he would call out to me so openly in such a public setting. "That waltz earlier was wonderful," he said, walking closer with genuine admiration in his voice. "Your footwork went from awkward to smooth. You have more natural grace than many noble ladies who've been practicing since childhood." "I was just dancing casually," I said, looking away quickly. "I barely managed not to stomp on Samson's shoes." I wanted to escape this uncomfortable situation quickly, but then I heard Derrick's voice again, carrying a gentle insistence I couldn't refuse.

"My beautiful lady, may I invite you for another dance?" His hand stopped in front of me, palm facing up, and I could see the slight curve of his knuckles from the tension in his grip. Curious glances from nearby guests drifted our way. I was caught between a rock and a hard place. Refusing too bluntly would be rude, but accepting would go against my intention to keep my distance from him. Just then, a steady, familiar voice sounded from behind me. It was Samson. "According to Eclipse Pack's ball etiquette," his voice was low and calm, carrying undeniable authority.

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"Dance partners determined by the draw are bound for the entire event and cannot be changed midway." I immediately chimed in, the tension in my fingertips finally easing. "I'm so sorry, Derrick. I drew number 56, which matches your brother's number. I really can't dance with you." After I finished speaking, Derrick's hand froze in midair. He was clearly disappointed. But he quickly withdrew his hand, and a soft chuckle came from beneath the silver mask. "I forgot about the rules.

Then next time during pack training, I'll ask you for a dance." I nodded quickly, my eyes following him as he turned and faded back into the crowd before I finally let out a long breath of relief. WED 31 1/2 ||| O < 15:58 wed, Chapter 151 The First Slice Suddenly, before I could fully recover, all the lights in the venue went dark with a whoosh. +30 Free Coins After a brief uproar, I heard the sound of wheels rolling closer, accompanied by the melody of the birthday song. "Happy birthday to you..." I looked toward the source of the sound.

Through the faint glow, I could see Josh and Alan pushing an enormous fruitcake toward the center of the room. Candles on the cake flickered warmly, and the top tier was decorated with cream shaped into the Eclipse Pack's totem. The surrounding guests joined in the singing one by one. Even Alice inside me started humming along with the tune, saying the melody made her soul feel warmer. When the song ended, someone shouted, "Make a wish, birthday boy!" Following everyone's gaze, I looked toward Samson. He stood in front of the cake, and his commanding Alpha presence had softened considerably.

He pressed his palms together and closed his eyes. Moonlight streaming through the ballroom's dome fell upon him. His shoulders in the black suit formed a perfectly straight line, and even his hanging fingertips exuded steadiness. I suddenly remembered Alice mentioning that high-ranking werewolves unconsciously channel their wolf spirit power when making wishes. At this moment, I could indeed sense a very faint energy, crisp like cedar, swirling around him. "Three, two, one-blow!" Everyone blew out the candles together, and applause erupted around me like thunder.

Before I could even react, Samson handed me a piece of cake. I looked at him in surprise. If I wasn't mistaken, this was the first slice. What did he mean by this? WED 31 Mark

Chapter 152 Notes in the Moonlight Amanda's POV: I frowned, looking at Samson with some confusion. +30 Free Coins Meeting my puzzled gaze, he just smiled and firmly pressed the cake into my hands, saying, "Try it." Seeing his insistence, I quickly took it with both hands. My fingertips accidentally brushed against the pads of his fingers, and the warmth there felt even more scorching than the cake itself. "Thank you." I thanked him politely, then forked a small piece and put it in my mouth. The sweet cream flavor eased the awkwardness from earlier.

"Do you like it?" Samson's gaze landed on my face, his voice lower than usual. "It's good." As I nodded, Alice screamed in my consciousness. "He's staring at your mouth!" Hearing Alice's words, I jerked my face away and rushed off toward the courtyard in a panic. I sat alone in a corner of the courtyard, staring at the moon in a daze. Soon, it was 11 p.m., and the birthday party was drawing to a close. I watched the butler see off the last batch of guests. The crystal chandeliers in the Ortega Castle went out one by one, leaving only the warm yellow night lights in the hallways.

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Only then did I grip the stair railing and slowly make my way back to my room. But since I'd eaten too many sweets tonight and couldn't digest them, I simply changed my clothes and went outside for a walk to settle my stomach. As I strolled leisurely along the stone path, I could feel the moonlight seeping through my skin, as if it were wrapping my wolf spirit in a layer of warm velvet. The swing creaked as I sat down and swayed gently. The soft clinking of its chains blended with the occasional chirping of crickets in the distance. Just then, piano music drifted over on the night breeze.

The melody was soft yet carried a piercing quality. The notes seemed alive as they burrowed into my ears. Even more strangely, Alice inside me suddenly perked up. "There's energy in this music! It feels so warm!" I was stunned too. Unlock succeeded. The piano music alternated between gentle and melancholic, the two emotions intertwining as if telling a story. O WED 31 Ø ||| O 1/2 Chapter 152 Notes in the Moonlight +30 Free Coins I stood up and followed the sound. The stone path beneath my feet gleamed silver in the moonlight, guiding me step by step toward the main building of the castle.

The music grew clearer and clearer, transforming from fragmented to complete and flowing. I walked all the way to the top floor of the castle, where that door with the silverwolf tapestry stood slightly ajar. The piano music and moonlight tangled together as they spilled through the gap. I gently pushed open the door. The instant my fingertips touched the wood, the music didn't pause. What came into view was a tall figure with his back turned. The man wore a black silk robe, his shoulders perfectly straight.

Moonlight streamed through the panoramic windows and fell upon him, rimming his dark hair with a silver edge. His fingers were long and powerful, leaping swiftly across the black and white keys. His knuckles flushed pale pink from the force, and every note flowed effortlessly from his fingertips. I stood in the doorway, even lightening my breathing. The music room was very quiet, with only the sound of the piano echoing. The moonlight stretched his shadow long, overlapping with the piano's silhouette to form a serene yet moving picture.

He seemed to sense something, and he slowly turned around. 1 WED Mark

Chapter 153 Four Hands, One Song Chapter 153 Four Hands, One Song Amanda's POV: Under the moonlight, the person who turned around was Samson. +30 Free Coins I froze for two seconds. It was hard to connect the man before me, whose fingertips still held the warmth of the piano keys, with that cold-faced, intimidating Alpha heir from the party. The piece he played was so delicate, completely at odds with his usual demeanor. "That was really good," I said sincerely. The moment the words left my mouth, he raised an eyebrow, his gaze falling on me with a hint of curiosity. "It's so late.

What are you doing here?" I scratched my head and pushed the door open further. "Your music drew me in. The more I listened, the more curious I got, so I couldn't help but come up." His tone was casual. "It's just something I play around with. Nothing special." "That's way more than just playing around." I walked over to the piano and added teasingly, "A piece like that must take years of practice, right?" Samson raised an eyebrow. "You know a lot about piano?" I felt a flash of guilt and rubbed my nose. "Not really.

I just studied a little bit before, enough to tell good from bad." I'd hoped to brush him off with that, but unexpectedly, he perked up with interest and scooted over to the side. "How about we play something together?" After a moment's thought, I agreed readily. "Sure.". Samson's POV: The noise from the birthday party was giving me a headache.

Watching Derrick act so persistent toward Amanda made me inexplicably irritated. He had never been as gentle as he appeared on the surface. When we were kids, he and I were the closest. He was quick-witted, more composed than Josh, sharper than Alan.

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We'd considered each other the closest of brothers. But all that changed the day his wolf spirit awakened. Those of us in the Eclipse Pack's direct bloodline all awakened pure black wolf spirits. He was the only exception. His awakened spirit carried gray tones. Once the news spread, the rumors in the pack never stopped. Everyone speculated whether he really carried the family name. My parents insisted over and over that he was their biological son, but seeds of doubt had been planted in WED 31 ||| O 1/2 15:58 Wed, Dec 31 A Chapter 153 Four Hands, One Song 60 +30 Free Coins all our hearts.

Wolf spirits never lied, and gray wolves had never been a symbol of our family's bloodline. After that, Derrick changed completely. He stopped being close to us, his personality grew increasingly cold, and he fought desperately to prove himself. What lurked in his eyes was clearly ambition for the Alpha heir position. Thinking about all this killed any desire to stay at the party, so I came to the top-floor music room for some peace and quiet. The moment my fingertips touched the keys, the irritation finally eased. I hadn't expected to hear a soft voice behind me halfway through playing.

Turning my head, I saw Amanda standing in the doorway, her eyes bright and sparkling like a startled yet curious little creature. The sight was actually kind of cute. I'd casually invited her to play together, thinking she'd make excuses, but she agreed so readily. When she sat down next to me, her hair carried a hint of the moonlight's coolness. The instant our four hands landed on the keys together, my heart skipped a beat. Her rhythm matched mine with shocking precision. I'd played this piece countless times.

No one had ever been able to keep up with my tempo, let alone coordinate this seamlessly. Even the arc of our hand movements was nearly identical. By the time the piece ended, I was genuinely surprised. This girl was always hiding things. She claimed only knew a little, but when she actually played, there was nothing hesitant about it. When her fingers flew across the keys, the light in her eyes was especially bright, completely different from her awkward demeanor at the party earlier. When she stood to leave, her retreating figure was as light as a breeze.

I stared at the lingering warmth on the keys, the melody of our duet still echoing in my ears. The secrets Amanda carried seemed to be multiplying. I raised my hand and pressed down on a key, producing a low note. Moonlight spilled across the piano keys, reflecting my shadow. The curiosity in my heart grew stronger and stronger. How many things about you don't I know, Amanda? O WED 31 ||| O 2/2 Mark

Chapter 154 The Wrong Person Overheard Amanda's POV: 060 +30 Free Coins The alarm clock exploded in my ears with a shrill ring. I rolled my eyes at the ceiling and

reluctantly dragged myself out of bed. After washing up in a daze, I'd barely pushed open my bedroom door when I ran straight into Samson. "Morning." He spoke first. His black dress shirt had its sleeves rolled up, revealing strong forearms. He looked way more approachable than he had at the party. "Good morning." I quickly responded. We walked side by side toward the stairs, our footsteps silent on the carpet.

"Did you sleep well last night?" He turned his head to ask, his gaze sweeping over the area beneath my eyes as if checking for dark circles. I smiled sweetly. "Pretty well. The moonlight in the music room was really comfortable." The moment the words left my mouth, I realized they sounded kind of suggestive. I quickly changed the subject, scanning the dining room. "Isn't Josh supposed to drive me to school today? Where is he?" "He was out partying with friends until the early hours. Got drunk and hasn't woken up yet." Samson's tone was flat. "I'm heading that way anyway.

"I'll drop you off." I didn't mind who drove me. I nodded. "Okay." I spent the entire car ride reviewing physical training questions. It wasn't until the car stopped at the training camp entrance that I hastily closed my notebook. "I'm heading in now. You should head to the Operations Department. See you!" I'd barely taken two steps after pushing open the car door when someone behind me suddenly called my name. The voice was pretty familiar. "Amanda!" I turned around to see Jayden running over with a fancy breakfast bag in hand, smiling broadly.

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"Finally caught you!" I frowned and didn't take the breakfast he offered, asking directly. "What are you doing here?" He scratched his head and pushed the breakfast toward me again, looking a bit embarrassed. "After the physical challenge ended last time, I wanted to say something to you, but when I turned around, you'd already disappeared. This is breakfast from that trendy bakery nearby. I figured training must be tough for you, so I brought some." "No need, but thanks." I took a small step back, avoiding his hand.

"I already ate breakfast." Taking things from members of other packs for no reason just felt wrong. The smile on Jayden's face dimmed a bit, but he still lowered the breakfast bag, his tone growing more serious. "I heard all about your physical challenge results. You placed first again. Honestly, Amanda, I really admire you." 1/2 WED 31 巴 ||| 15:58 Wed, Dec 31 G 60 Chapter 154 The Wrong Person Overheard +30 Free Coins I was even more confused now and raised an eyebrow. "Jayden, you waited here specifically for me.

"Do you actually need something?" He took a deep breath, as if he'd made up his mind. "Yeah, I do. I know you haven't awakened a wolf spirit, but I don't care about that stuff. When I competed against you in the physical challenge, your explosive power and endurance were stronger than many of the Betas in Windspire Pack. That's real skill His words caught me off guard. What exactly was he trying to say? Before I could respond, he rushed on. "I'm not here to cause you trouble. I wanted to tell you that Windspire Pack really needs people with real abilities like you.

I know you have an arrangement with Eclipse Pack right now. That's fine. I can wait for you to finish things up here. Whenever you're ready, no matter when that is, Windspire Pack's doors will always be open to you!" So that's what this was about. The confusion in my mind cleared, and my tone softened. "Thanks for thinking so highly of me, but I don't have any plans to switch packs right now." Jayden got anxious and stepped forward. "Don't reject me so fast! I know Eclipse Pack is a major pack, but they might not really value your abilities. Think about it.

With your physical skills, you'd definitely get the best resources in Windspire Pack, way better than being here as..." His words cut off abruptly as a cough sounded from behind him, low and sharp. My heart tightened, and I whipped my head around. 2/2 20 31 ||| o Mark

Chapter 155 Unexpected Arrival Amanda's POV: +30 Free Coins Samson hadn't left. He stood by the car with his hands tucked into his suit pants pockets, his expression unreadable. The morning sunlight fell on him but couldn't dispel the faint chill surrounding him. His gaze landed directly on Jayden, carrying the oppressive presence unique to Alphas. I stood between the two of them, so embarrassed I could've dug myself into the ground. Samson couldn't possibly think I was going to agree, right? That would be a huge misunderstanding.

Before I could explain, Samson's gaze shifted to me, landing on my face. His tone was impossible to read. "You're going to be late for school. Are you leaving or not?" I quickly responded to Jayden, telling him I needed to get to training before speed-walking toward the camp. As I passed by Samson, he suddenly said in a low voice, "Eclipse Pack's resources aren't something outsiders need to worry about." His voice wasn't loud, but it was just loud enough for Jayden behind us to hear. I glanced back.

Jayden's face had gone pale, while Samson was looking at me with an emotion in his eyes I couldn't quite decipher. How did I manage to get into trouble again this early in the morning? I sighed and quickened my pace toward the classroom building. His gaze followed me until I walked through the entrance and it finally disappeared. What's been going on lately? Everyone around me has been acting so weird. Thank goodness I had the foresight to hide my true identity early on. Otherwise, there'd be even more trouble. 1 Suddenly, someone lunged at me.

It was Emily, hugging my neck and shaking me back and forth, her eyes bright with excitement. "Amanda! You're finally here!" Emily leaned close to my ear, her voice conspiratorial. "I've got some major gossip for you. Camilla and Josh seem like they have something going on!" "Camilla?" I froze for a moment. Although I'd sometimes noticed Josh seemed to act differently around Camilla, I'd never really believed Camilla would be interested in Josh. After all, Camilla was now the confirmed Alpha heir of Mystic Moon Pack, while Josh was a goofball who never took anything seriously.

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Thinking about it, I couldn't help but sigh and shake my head. After all this time together, Josh had become like a mischievous little brother in my mind. +40 Fres Couns As if worried I wouldn't believe her, Emily continued, "During training this morning, Josh gave Camilla his energy drink!" I walked into the classroom skeptically and had just sat down when I caught sight of Josh and Camilla sitting together. Josh was helping Camilla look over her training notes, his finger pointing at the notebook.

Camilla snapped, her expression full of disdain, "Who asked you for help, you dummy!" Although her expression carried a hint of disgust, I noticed the tips of her ears turning red. "What's that supposed to mean? No good deed goes unpunished!" Josh grumbled. The next second, before any of us could react, he quickly grabbed the notebook and ran off. "Josh! You stop right there!" Camilla let out a sharp cry and grabbed a book to chase after him. Seeing this scene unfold, Alice's voice rang with amazement in my mind. "Finally someone who can tame that troublemaker.

Those two are a real match made in heaven." I couldn't help but smile. Back when I was in Glacier Pack, my mind was completely occupied with training and protecting the pack. I never had time to pay attention to this kind of stuff. Now I was actually gossiping with Emily, and even Alice had noticed the change in me, "You're becoming more and more like a normal girl lately," Alice's tone carried a hint of nostalgia, "Before if I tried to get you to listen to this stuff, you'd say it was a waste of time." I froze, nearly dropping the pen in my hand onto the desk. It really was true.

Ever since coming to Eclipse Pack, I'd found myself getting flustered over something Samson said, chatting about gossip with friends, and even playing piano with someone in the music room. These were all things the old me would never have done. "Maybe it's because life here is so stable," I said softly in my mind. As soon as the afternoon theory class ended, I pulled Emily, Jennifer, and Clara toward the barbecue restaurant off campus. "My treat today. Let's eat and chat about Josh and Camilla." I patted my chest, genuinely curious about the gossip surrounding Josh.

Jennifer teased with a smile, "Who was it that used to say 'gossip is a waste of training time? Now look who's the most eager." My face flushed red. I was about to argue back when my gaze suddenly swept across the street. A familiar figure stood at the bus stop, clad in a black trench coat, his build tall and upright. My stomach dropped, and I nearly let go of my bag. No way. Was I seeing things? +30 Free Coins I rubbed my eyes. The man across the street seemed to sense my gaze and slowly removed his sunglasses.

The evening light fell on his face, outlining familiar features. He nodded toward me, the corner of his mouth curving into a meaningful smile. Why was he here? 1 WILD 31 Mark

Chapter 156 The Song She Won't Write Amanda's POV: 960 +30 Free Coins Watching Emily and the others walk into the barbecue restaurant, I took a deep breath and headed across the street. I approached the man in the black trench coat step by step.

The familiar features grew clearer and clearer. It was Seven, my closest music partner back in Glacier Pack. "Avi, long time no see." He spoke first, his smile still carrying that hint of shyness from before, though his eyes held more maturity now. I smiled too. "How did you find me here?"

"I thought you would've planted roots in Howlstead's music scene by now." Alice had a moment of realization in my consciousness. "Is that the kid who could stabilize rampaging wolf spirits with his music? I remember feeling so comfortable listening to that piece he wrote, 'Glacier Echoes.'" Seven was one of the rare musical prodigies in Howlstead. His melodies could precisely match the fluctuations of wolf spirits, even more effective than ordinary energy crystals. Back in Glacier Pack, we'd worked on music together. He composed, I wrote lyrics.

We'd released several well-known soothing melodys until I left to hide my identity. "I ran into Nine," Seven said, naturally walking toward the shade of a tree by the roadside. "He told me you were in Eclipse Pack territory and that you'd disguised yourself as an ordinary Omega. So I followed the trail here." I nodded. "Let's find somewhere to talk. Too many eyes and ears around here." Seven led me toward the back street behind the school and turned into a small restaurant. We'd barely sat down when the server brought tea. Seven couldn't help but look me up and down.

"This disguise is really ugly," he said after holding it in for a while. "Your face is all sallow, and your hair's a mess. If it weren't for your eyes and the way you walk, I honestly wouldn't have recognized you." I picked up my teacup and took a sip without explaining. Seeing I wasn't responding, Seven tactfully changed the subject. "Have you been doing well these past few years?" The corner of my mouth lifted as I turned the question back on him. "What do you think?" He rubbed his nose and sighed. "Probably not too bad. It's just such a waste.

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With your talent, if you'd stayed in the music scene, you'd be at the top of your game by now. So many packs would be fighting to have you write soothing melodys for them." I suppressed the turmoil inside me and looked out the window. "I heard you're writing lyrics and a 31 O r 1/3 15:59 Wed, Dec 31 G Chapter 156 The Song She Won't Write 3474 +30 Free Coins composing for people now. Word around the scene is that your music can instantly calm rampaging wolf spirits." Seven smiled, his eyes full of devotion to music. Just making a living.

But I did come here today because of someone." My heart skipped a beat. I had a vague guess about where this was going. Seeing my calm expression, Seven got straight to the point. "It's Alan, the third son of Eclipse Pack. He's currently the ambassador for Howlstead and needs a soothing melody that can really put him on the map. I thought about it from every angle, and you're the only one who can create something like that." "Seven," I interrupted him, my tone firm. "When I left the music

scene years ago, I said I'd never write again." "That was years ago!" He leaned forward anxiously.

"Are you really going to stay trapped in the past?" "Do you think it's something I can just let go of?" I looked into his eyes, my voice dropping lower. Seven hesitated, unable to say a word for a long time. I relaxed and softened my tone. "If you came here to ask me to write lyrics and compose, then I'm sorry but I can't help you. But if you're just here as an old friend to have tea and chat, you're always welcome." My attitude was crystal clear, and Seven understood. His face was full of regret, but he still wouldn't give up. "Avi, I'm just asking for one song.

Lyrics and music both from you. Just one! Alan genuinely wants to do real work for Howlstead. He's not like those guys who are only out to make a profit." "Seven, saying it over and over won't change anything." I shook my head. My principles wouldn't change for anyone. Seeing the determination in my eyes, he finally gave up. "I'm sorry. I know asking you to make this choice is difficult. Since you don't want to, I won't bring it up again." As he spoke, he pulled an embossed business card from his pocket and placed it in front of me. "This is my private number.

If you ever change your mind, contact me anytime. No matter what, we're old friends of many years. That connection will always be there." I took the card and slipped it into my pocket. "Let's eat. The food's getting cold." Seeing me accept the card, a trace of relief crossed Seven's face. He quickly urged me to pick up my fork. The meal went smoothly enough. We talked about many old stories from Glacier Pack, carefully avoiding the topic of music. After the meal, Seven drove me back to the school entrance. Before leaving, he said seriously, "Avi, remember to call me.

Anytime is fine." I waved and turned to walk into the school. As soon as I got back to the classroom, I saw Emily sitting in O 31 2/3 15:59 Wed, Dec 31 G Chapter 156 The Song She Won't Write 60 +30 Free Coins her seat fuming, her fingers flying across her phone screen so fast it looked like she could poke holes. through it. I sat down next to her and poked her arm. "What's wrong? Who dared to tick off Ms. Wood?" WED 31 ||| < Mark

Chapter 157 The Temptation to Help Amanda's POV: +30 Free Coins Emily slammed her phone down on the desk, her eyes red. "It's Alan! Those people online in the pack community are awful. They're randomly attacking Alan for no reason!" I froze for a moment, then took her phone to refresh the page. The hashtag #AlanDoesnt Deservellis Position was trending at the top on Instagram.

The comments section was full of nasty remarks saying he only became Howlstead's ambassador because of Eclipse Pack's connections, that he only knew how to talk a big game, couldn't even produce a decent soothing melody, and had never actually done anything real for Howlstead. Alice snorted in contempt. "Are these people bored out of their minds? That kid Alan just donated a batch of energy crystals to the border packs. Did they forget already?" I frowned deeply. Alan might act arrogant, but he always got things done.

Last time when wolf spirits went berserk at the border packs, he was the first one to contact Seven to c soothing music. "Don't be upset. I'll figure something out." I patted Emily's back and opened the werewolf forum, read argue back. The instant I refreshed the page, all those nasty comments suddenly vanished. Even the hashtag disappeared completely, as if it had never existed. "Huh? Where'd it go?" Emily was stunned too. "Did someone delete it?" I had a vague guess but didn't say much, only reassuring her.

"Either way, it's good that the nasty comments are gone." The only person who could suppress trending topics on the werewolf forum this fast was Samson. I couldn't think of anyone else. The afternoon training passed quickly. My mind was completely occupied with Alan's situation. Seven had only come this morning to ask me to write a soothing melody for Alan, and by afternoon, people were already attacking him for not producing any work. It was too much of a coincidence. By the time I returned to the Ortega Castle, dusk had already fallen.

I'd barely set down my backpack when I heard intermittent piano music from upstairs. The melody was chaotic and frantic. My eyes lit up. Thinking it was Samson playing piano, with the chemistry from our last duet still fresh in my mind, I dropped my things and ran upstairs. Just as I reached the staircase, the piano music suddenly cut off, followed by a loud crash, like sheet music being swept to the floor, along with the sharp sound of pencils hitting the ground. I paused mid-step and saw the music room door thrown open violently.

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Alan walked out with an ashen face, his hair disheveled from anger. 31 1/3 ||| O r  
Chapter 157 The Temptation to Help "Alan?" I called out instinctively. +30 Free Coins  
He glanced at me with a dark expression, said nothing, and brushed past me without even a greeting. I stood there, growing more curious. I gently pushed open the slightly ajar music room door. The music room that had been clean and tidy yesterday now looked like it had been ransacked. The floor was covered with crumpled sheet music.

The music stand on the piano was tilted to one side, with several pencils scattered around, their tips broken. I bent down to pick up a crumpled paper ball near my feet. Unfolding it, I found an unfinished composition with scrawling handwriting. One glance told me it was Alan's. Alice said lazily, "This piece is way too flat. It's like a half-asleep wolf pup with no energy at all. No wonder he can't use it." I was still examining it when footsteps sounded behind me. It was Bethany Duran, one of the maids. "Ms. Lamb, there you are," she said, looking troubled. "The thing is, Mr.

Ortega has to work late at the Operations Department tonight. Mr. Hugh is worried outside food isn't clean, so he had the kitchen prepare something to send over. But Anya's grandson and she took leave, and Beata has to take care of Mr. Toby, so there's really no one available to go." "You want me to deliver dinner to Samson?" I understood immediately! Bethany quickly waved her hands. "If it's inconvenient for you, never mind.

I'll think of another way." I glanced at the mess in the music room and thought of Alan's furious expression. I simply nodded. "It's fine. I'll deliver it.

I don't have anything else going on anyway." Bethany was overjoyed. "Thank you so much, Ms. Lamb! I'll go pack up the food right away!" After she left, I picked up the paper balls from the floor one by one and stuffed them all in my backpack. Alan's compositions actually had a decent foundation. They just lacked that certain "punch" to move wolf spirits. With some tweaking, they might be usable: When I left carrying the packed meal containers, I also brought Alan's sheet music with me.

Sitting in the car heading to the Operations Department, I pulled out a pen and slowly modified the sheet music. I deepened the bland lower-register notes and added several staccato notes to the climax, like a wolf pup's sudden awakening howl. It instantly had soul. "Now that's more like it," Alice said with satisfaction. "It's got a bit of the flavor from when you wrote 'Glacier Echoes' back in the day." I'd just finished editing one section when the car stopped in front of the Operations Department. "Ms.

Lamb, we're here." O WED 31 O 2/3 15:59 Wed, Dec 31 Chapter 157 The Temptation to Help +30 Free Coins The driver reminded me. I quickly stuffed the pen and sheet music into my pocket and got out with the meal containers. Most people at the Operations Department had seen me before. I'd attended a pack meeting with Hugh last time, so quite a few recognized me. As soon as I walked in, the receptionist greeted me respectfully. "Ms. Lamb." I smiled and nodded, heading straight for the VIP elevator. Samson's assistant was already waiting by the elevator. Seeing me, he hurried over. "Ms.

Lamb, what brings you here?" I lifted the meal containers. "Bringing Samson dinner. Is he busy?" "Mr. Ortega is in a video conference. It'll probably be another half hour." The assistant led me toward the office. "Please wait in the office. I'll pour you some tea." This wasn't my first time in Samson's office, but it was the first time I'd quietly taken it all in. The office was spacious with a black leather couch, a large mahogany desk, and a wolf totem oil paint hanging on the wall.

Most striking was the massive panoramic window with the city's night view spr below, lights sparkling brilliantly. I sat down on the couch and picked up a werewolf history magazine from the nearby bookshelf. After flipping through two pages, my mind wasn't on it at all. The sheet music in my pocket felt uncomfortable bulky. Should I help Alan or not? If I helped him, I'd be breaking my vow from years ago never to write again. But if I didn't help him, the thought of him being attacked online and the memory of Seven's pleading look this morning filled me with guilt. Ugh, I felt so conflicted.

O Mark

Chapter 158 When Worlds Collide Chapter 158 When Worlds Collide Amanda's POV: +30 Free Coins I pulled out the sheet music from my pocket and looked at the modifications I'd made. The scale in my heart slowly tipped. Just then, the office door

suddenly swung open. Samson walked in with his suit jacket draped over his arm, his tie loosened halfway, a hint of exhaustion in his eyes. Seeing me, he froze for a moment, and the exhaustion faded. "What are you doing here?" I looked up at him. "I came to bring you dinner. Bethany made your favorite black pepper steak." "Perfect timing.

I'm starving." He set his files on the desk and opened the meal containers. The aroma immediately filled the air. He placed a piece of steak on my plate. "Eat with me. This is way too much for just one person." We sat across from each other. Whenever our forks accidentally touched, he always paused first to let me go ahead. Halfway through the meal, he suddenly asked, "That part you played during our duet last time, did you arrange it yourself?" "Yeah, I thought that transition flowed better." I scooped up some pasta, afraid to meet his eyes. "It was really good," his voice dropped lower.

"More spirited than the original. Your hands aren't just made for training. They're made for playing piano too." Alice whistled in my consciousness. "He's totally complimenting you. Look at his eyes. They're practically glued to your hands." I choked. He quickly handed me a glass of water. His fingertips brushed my hand, the warmth so searing that I jerked my hand back. The air felt thick with awkward tension. He cleared his throat lightly and turned to look out the window.

"Alan's been under a lot of pressure lately because of this soothing melody issue." I was about to respond when his phone suddenly rang. It was a preset alarm. Samson glanced at the time and frowned. "Almost forgot. I have an online lesson scheduled for Isnes language." Isnes language? My heart dropped, and I shot to my feet. "Oh no!" He looked startled. "What's wrong?" "Nothing." I waved dismissively, grabbing my backpack and bolting for the door. "I just remembered 1/3 31 O Chapter 158 When Worlds Collide something urgent.

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I've got to go!" +30 Free Coins \* As soon as I left the Operations Department, I immediately pulled out my phone and switched to my "Sara" account. I quickly sent a message. "Something came up. Let's start class in half an hour. Sorry about that." He replied instantly. "No rush. Take your time." I urged the driver to hurry home. The moment I got back to my room, I quickly opened my laptop and adjusted the webcam. Half an hour later, Samson's face appeared on the screen. He'd changed into a casual white dress shirt, his hair falling loosely. He looked more relaxed than he had at the office.

"Sorry for making you wait," I said first. "It's fine." He smiled and pulled out his notebook. "I organized a few questions about the grammar from last time." Isnes was an ancient language from Howlstead, obscure and difficult to understand. But he learned incredibly fast. I only had to explain something once before he could draw connections, even remembering complex conjugations perfectly. Alice sighed in admiration. "No wonder he's the Alpha heir.

This learning ability is way better than the stubborn old-timers back in Glacier Pack." Watching him concentrate so seriously on the screen, I suddenly felt introspective. Samson was already so accomplished, yet he was still desperately working to shore up his weaknesses. What about me? To stabilize Alice and become Alpha King, weren't there still so many areas where I was falling short? Like my control over wolf spirit power, and my understanding of the dynamics between different packs. I needed to strengthen all of it.

When the lesson ended, I closed the laptop and rubbed my throbbing temples. Turning around, I saw the sheet music on my desk—the pages I'd picked up from the music room earlier. I grabbed my pen and continued revising, following my earlier train of thought, transforming Alan's flat, straightforward melody into something with peaks and valleys. The opening was like a whisper under moonlight, the climax like the howl of an awakening wolf spirit, and the ending returned to gentleness, perfectly matching the needs of a soothing melody.

"I'm just doing this to help Emily," I murmured to the sheet music. Alan was Emily's idol. If he could present this piece, Emily would definitely be thrilled. Besides, this was just editing, which didn't really violate my principle of never writing again. After finishing the last note, I tucked the sheet music away with satisfaction, washed up, and went to bed. O WED 31 3 2/3 Chapter 158 When Worlds Collide +30 Free Coins The next morning, I'd barely made it downstairs when I saw Derrick sitting on the couch in the main hall. He wore a light gray suit, more formal than usual.

Seeing me, he immediately stood up with a smile. "Morning, Amanda." My footsteps faltered. Ever since he'd confessed his feelings last time, I'd been avoiding him. If it weren't for Hugh ordering all five brothers to take turns driving me to school, I really wouldn't want any contact with him. Moreover, Theo had sent word last time that Derrick's gray wolf spirit seemed to be connected to some old grudges within Eclipse Pack. This guy was way too deep in murky waters. I didn't want to get dragged in. "Morning," I replied coolly and headed straight for the dining room.

He acted as if he hadn't noticed my distance and followed, pulling out a chair for me. "Come have breakfast. Bethany made your favorite bread." I sat down and quickly stuffed bread into my mouth. I wanted to finish eating and leave as fast as possible. After finishing breakfast, I grabbed my backpack and rushed outside. Derrick hurried to follow. The atmosphere in the car was stiff. I kept my head down, working on math problems, pretending not to hear his hesitant sighs. I don't know how much time passed before he suddenly spoke. "Amanda." I looked up, confused.

His hands gripped the steering wheel so tightly his knuckles had gone white, complicated emotions filling his eyes. What exactly did he want? O 31 < 3/3 15:59 Wed, Dec 31 G Mark

Chapter 159 The Face Behind the Cap Amanda's POV: 60 +30 Free Coins Derrick turned to look at me, his eyes holding a hint of suspicion. "Sorry, I was a bit too forward

last time. I withdrew my gaze, my fingertips unconsciously rubbing the backpack strap, a polite smile on my face. "That's all in the past. It's fine." But inside I didn't relax. This apology came too conveniently, right after I'd deliberately distanced myself from him, making me feel Samson's earlier warning wasn't baseless. "Are you sure it's okay?" he pressed, his tone softening. "I'm sorry, Amanda.

I never thought my feelings for you would cause you trouble. Can we just interact like we used to? Just pretend that never happened, okay?" Alice snorted coldly in my consciousness. "This guy's got it all figured out. He's trying to keep you on the hook." While I felt relieved, I became even more wary. His eagerness to repair our relationship actually confirmed his motives for approaching me weren't pure. I nodded. "Okay." After a pause, I added. "The Operations Department must be pretty busy right now.

If you're swamped o regular days, you don't need to drive me to school." I really didn't want to get further entangled with him. But Derrick interrupted me, his tone brooking no refusal. "You're forgetting this is Grandpa's order. No matter how busy we brothers are, we must see you safely to school." I was instantly speechless. To refuse Hugh's orders any further would seem ungrateful. I could only shut my mouth. The moment the car stopped, I grabbed my backpack and rushed toward the school gate without even saying goodbye. I'd barely taken two steps when someone tapped my shoulder.

I reflexively stepped aside, only relaxing after seeing who it was. Clara and Jennifer flanked me on either side. "What are you thinking about? You're totally zoned out!" Clara poked my cheek. "You didn't even notice us coming. If we'd been enemies, you would've been ambushed by now." I smiled, smoothly changing the subject. "I was thinking about that physical tactics problem the instructor assigned yesterday. After you interrupted me like that, I actually figured out the solution." "Oh please!" Clara rolled her eyes, slapping her own head.

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"Do straight-A students all have the same study brain? Working on problems even while walking!" O 31 ||| o 1/3 Chapter 139 The Face Behind the Cap +30 Free Coins "Straight-A students are bound to be straight-A students just because of that kind of focus." Jennifer sighed, then suddenly stopped and held my hand earnestly. "Amanda, seriously, I really admire you. Your physical abilities are stronger than all of ours, and you're so sharp. During the last group competition, if it weren't for the tactics you came up with, we never would've Clara leaned in too, her eyes sparkling. "Exactly!

Let me tell you, my dad's always pushing me to improve my abilities and compete for the Alpha position. If you're willing to come to our Polar Pack, I guarantee I'll get you the best coaching resources, and we'll rise to the top together!" Jennifer quickly jumped in. "What Polar Pack? Silvermoon Pack is way better! Come to us, and we'll team up. I'll definitely be one step closer to the Alpha position!" I was amused by their enthusiasm and quickly waved my hands.

"Thanks for thinking so highly of me, but I still have an arrangement with Eclipse Pack right now, so I can't consider these things at the moment. But we're friends, so whenever you need help with physical training or tactics, just come find me!" Though both were a bit disappointed, they didn't push it. Jennifer suddenly remembered something, pulling me toward the shade by the classroom building and lowering her voice. "By the way, Amanda, there's something I wanted to ask your help with."

"Go ahead." "I want to boost my public reputation in Silvermoon Pack," Jennifer said, her cheeks flushing. "After all, to compete for Alpha, I need everyone to recognize me. I've already looked into it. The Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department has a short-term image management course that specifically teaches how to deal with the public. Can you come with me? With you there, I'll feel more confident." "No problem." I agreed immediately. I didn't have training that afternoon anyway, and helping a friend. was the least I could do. Jennifer jumped up happily, pulling me off campus. "Perfect!"

Let's go now. Don't want to be late!" Taking a cab to the Foreign Affairs Department building, I looked at the sign reading "Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department" above the entrance and suddenly froze. Last time Alan mentioned he was in charge of image publicity work here. Wasn't this his department? "What are you spacing out for? Let's go!" Jennifer pulled my arm and we walked into the elevator. We'd just pressed the floor button when a man wearing a baseball cap hurried in. Seeing us inside, he pulled the brim lower, turned around to face away from us, and stood in the corner. I frowned.

This person's aura felt familiar, as if I'd sensed it somewhere before, but I couldn't recall where. He wore a black hoodie with his hands tucked into his pockets, shoulders slightly tense, looking very nervous. Alice suddenly became alert. "This person's deliberately hiding his aura. His wolf spirit fluctuations are very weak, but he's not an ordinary person." WED 31 2/3 ||| O < υ O 31 ρ Chapter 159 The Face Behind the Cap +30 Free Coins The elevator quickly reached the floor. The man was the first to exit, hurrying down the corridor. Jennifer and I followed behind.

Just as we stepped out of the elevator, I saw promotional posters hanging on the corridor wall. It was a poster of Alan as the image ambassador, with another poster next to it. I stared at the photo on the poster and suddenly stopped in my tracks. The man holding a guitar in the poster, though his smile was brilliant, had facial features that were clearly identical to the guy in the baseball cap from the elevator. I remembered now. ||| Γ 3/3 15:59 Wed, Dec 31 G Mark

Chapter 160 Alan's Breaking Point Alan's POV My fingers crashed onto the piano keys, the harsh notes tearing through the quiet office. +30 Free Coins I yanked at my tie, annoyed, and crushed the sheet music in front of me. This was the 32nd failed draft this month. A knock came at the door. One of my staff stepped in with a tablet, looking uneasy. "Mr. Alan, there are more negative comments on Instagram. They're saying you're hogging the ambassador spot and still can't produce a single decent soothing melody." I let out a humorless laugh and swiped through the screen.

There weren't many comments, but every one of them hit hard. Someone was clearly stirring things up. A few days ago, a full wave of hate comments had exploded online. Samson managed to suppress it only by using resources from the Operations Department. Whoever was behind this was targeting Eclipse Pack. No question about it. "Found the source yet?" I tossed the tablet aside, fingers tightening. The Howlstead ambassador title was something Eclipse Pack fought tooth and nail to earn. If I failed he I'd lose face for myself and bring shame to the entire pack. "Not yet."

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They're hiding their IP well." My staff paused. I frowned. Chasing ghosts was useless right now. What mattered more was creating a soothing melody that could shut everyone up. "How's Seven?" I asked. Seven was currently Howlstead's most popular music artist. His songs perfectly matched wolf-spirit, frequencies. I'd asked him to collaborate, but he kept saying the piece was still "missing its final soul." "I was just about to report on that." My staff stepped closer. "I contacted Seven's manager. He said Seven has an old friend, codename Avi. Back in the Glacier Pack, H was a famous composer."

That person wrote 'Wolf-Soul Whispers,' still considered the gold standard of soothing melodies, Seven says only H can complete the song's missing soul." "She retired years ago," I said. "Yes, but Seven says he'll try. They have a life-and-death bond, so maybe he can convince her. My team is following up. We'll update you the moment we hear anything." I waved him out, and silence returned. Frustration pulsed through me like a rising tide. I grabbed my coat. If I kept sitting here, I'd end up 31 ||| O 1/2 15:59 Wed, Dec Chapter 160 Alan's Breaking Point smashing the piano.

Some fresh air might help. At the elevator, I spotted two familiar figures. +30 Free Coins The girl in the school uniform, pale and tired-looking but with bright eyes and messy hair-Amanda. Next to her stood Jennifer from Polar Pack, the rising alpha successor at the Werewolf Language Academy. Amanda noticed me and blinked before giving a polite smile. "Mr. Alan." Jennifer followed suit with a respectful greeting. "What are you two doing here?" I asked. This floor wasn't open to just anyone.

"I'm helping Jennifer sign up for the image management course," Amanda said, pointing to the girl beside her. "She wants to boost her status in the pack. I heard the Foreign Affairs Department offers short programs." I nodded. It made sense. If Jennifer wanted to compete for Polar Pack's alpha seat, polishing her public image was normal. My eyes drifted back to Amanda. She wore a plain white hoodie, nothing special, but her eyes sparkled like hidden stars. "The registration office is on the third floor. Straight ahead, then left," I said. "Need help finding it?" "No, we're good. Thanks, Mr."

Alan." Amanda waved, pulling Jennifer toward the stairs. She hopped along like a little rabbit. I watched her disappear down the hall, my lips lifting despite myself. This girl was far more capable than Josh ever was. Shaking off the thought, I headed for the parking garage. I had barely taken two steps when my phone rang. "Mr. Alan! Good news!" my

staff shouted, excited. "Seven just contacted us. Avi agreed to take a look at the piece! If it fits, she'll help complete it!" What? I shot upright, practically bouncing around the office. We were saved! u 31 | ||| O r O WED 2/2 Mark

Chapter 161 Broken Notes and Broken Hearts Amanda's POV: Alan hurried off, probably still struggling with that soothing melody. +30 Free Coins Jennifer tugged me toward the registration desk. While she checked her information with the staff, I sneaked out my phone and messaged Seven. "I looked at the score. I can complete it." Alice snorted inside my mind. "You softhearted fool. Didn't you swear you weren't going to help? And now look at you." I shoved the phone away like nothing happened and helped Jennifer finish her paperwork.

Once everything was done, Jennifer slung an arm around my shoulders. "Since you came with me, dinner's on me! Let's grab Clara and Emily and hit Monarch Lounge tonight!" Exactly what I needed, so I nodded right away. I texted Clara and Emily. Just like that, the whole afternoon felt lighter. At Monarch Lounge, the private room was bright and noisy. Emily was screaming into the mic, Clara clapped along, and Jennifer curled up on the couch scrolling through songs. I sat with a fruit plate, eating watermelon, and finally let their energy pull me in.

I grabbed a mic and sang a little tune I used to hum back at Glacier Pack. I wrote it myself back when I hadn't gone quiet yet. It was never released. Only Seven had heard it. I had barely finished the chorus when Emily lunged at me, eyes sparkling. "Amanda! That was amazing! And that melody... it sounds just like my idol Avi!" My heart lurched. The mic nearly slipped from my hand. "Don't be ridiculous. I just made it up. How could I compare to Avi?" I shoved the mic into Jennifer's hands to change the subject. "Your turn. Didn't you want to sing the latest hit?" Alice cackled. "Relax.

She has no clue you're H. But I'll admit, that voice of yours ... you hide it well. You don't sound like that when you talk." Emily looked like she wanted to interrogate me more, but Clara pulled her back. "Let Amanda be humble, okay? Now hush. Let's sing." I sighed and escaped to the bathroom. 1/3 18:14 Wed, Dec 31 M ... (33) Chapter 161 Broken Notes and Broken Hearts +30 Free Coins But when I turned the corner, I spotted a woman in a red dress crouched on the floor, picking something up. A tube of lipstick rolled to my feet. I bent down and handed it to her.

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"Miss, your lipstick." She lifted her head. Her features were so perfect she looked like a porcelain doll. She smiled softly. "Thank you, little one." Then she reached out and tucked a stray lock of my hair behind my ear. The gesture was gentle, intimate, practiced. "There. Much tidier." I forced a polite smile. "No problem." I turned to walk away when I heard her calling someone, voice sugar-soft. "Samson, are you here? I'm in the third-floor hallway near the restroom. I'll come find you." Samson? I froze. Immediately, I thought of Samson Ortega. Then I shook my head. Impossible.

He was too cold, too serious. He wouldn't have a ... sweet-voiced friend like that. Alice scoffed. "Men hide secrets all the time. Don't overthink it." I pushed the idea away and returned to the hall—except Monarch Lounge was huge, and every hallway looked the same. After two full loops, I was officially lost. As I pulled out my phone to call Jennifer, something caught my eye. A familiar figure stood outside a private room. It was Samson. He wore a black casual suit, no tie, the top two buttons undone.

Under the warm hallway lights, his side profile looked sharper, colder, impossibly handsome. I called out without thinking. "Samson..." He didn't hear me. He was checking his phone. At that moment, the woman in the red dress glided up beside him. She rose on her toes and pressed a light kiss to his cheek, then wrapped her arms around his. "Samson, sorry to keep you waiting." His body stiffened for a second. But he didn't push her away. Instead, he rested a hand on her head, gently messing her hair like he was fond of her.

They walked into the private room together, and the door closed behind them. 2/3 18:14 Wed, Dec 31 M... Chapter 161 Broken Notes and Broken Hearts My heart tightened—like someone squeezing it hard, dull and painful. 33 +30 Free Coins Logic told me Samson's friends had nothing to do with me. I should go back to my own room. But my feet wouldn't move. Alice sighed. "Oh sweetheart... this isn't your business." A server approached gently. "Miss, do you need any help?" I waved him off. And against all reason, I stepped to the door and peeked through the narrow opening. Inside, the lights were dim.

Samson and the woman sat close on the couch in the center of the room. She held onto his arm, her head resting on his shoulder as she whispered something to him. Samson leaned slightly toward her. He was smiling. Softly. Warmly. A smile I'd never seen before. Suddenly, a huge force slammed into my back. "Ah-!" I stumbled forward, crashing through the door. I hit the floor hard. Pain shot through my palms. The music stopped instantly. Silence swept the room. Every head turned toward me—including Samson. His smile froze. His expression twisted into shock ... and something else I couldn't read.

The woman in red looked surprised as well. I stayed there on the carpet, palms throbbing, face burning. Great. Perfect. I had officially embarrassed myself beyond repair. 3/3 18:14 Wed, Dec 31 M Mark

Chapter 162 Collision Course Amanda's POV: 33 +30 Free Coins "Wow, looks like someone delivered herself right to us." A blond man lounging on the corner couch whistled at me, tone sleazy. I wished the floor would swallow me whole. My fingers twisted into my sweatshirt, and I kept my head down, not daring to move. "Hey pretty, did you go to the wrong room?" The blond man asked. His footsteps came closer. I knew I couldn't avoid it forever. I took a long breath and lifted my head. The moment the man saw my face, his steps froze.

His Adam's apple bobbed hard, then his expression twisted in disgust. "Where did this ugly girl come from? Get out!" The switch from flirtation to insult was so fast it stunned me. But I wasn't in the mood to argue. I scrambled up and rushed toward the door. I had barely taken a step when a familiar voice sounded behind me. "Why are you here?" It was Samson. My whole body tensed. I turned slowly, forcing an awkward smile. "What a coincidence... you're here too?" "Mr. Ortega, you know her?" The blond man leaned in, confused.

Clearly, he couldn't understand why Samson would know a "mess like me." Samson didn't answer right away. The woman beside him did-red dress, doll-like face, warm voice. "I saw her in the restroom earlier. She even picked up my lipstick for me. Samson, you know her?" Samson finally spoke, his voice steady. "She's a major shareholder of our Eclipse Pack. Amanda Lamb." The room went silent. The blond man's face was drained of color. His mouth opened, but no sound came out. I was stunned too. Why did Samson reveal my identity? Before I could process it, Samson continued naturally. "Ms.

Lamb is likely here to discuss our 1/2 18:14 Wed, Dec 31 M ... 33 Chapter 162 Collision Course +30 Free Coins collaboration with Frostveil Pack. Convenient, since Frostveil's alpha, Mr. Ellington, is right here. We can finalize everything today." My thoughts snapped into place. The blond man was Marcus Ellington, alpha of Frostveil Pack. Famous for being a doting brother. The woman in red-his little sister, Chloe Ellington. Marcus quickly adjusted his attitude, getting up with a polite smile. "So it's Ms. Lamb. My apologies, truly. Your entrance was... memorable." My cheeks burned.

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I forced myself to smile and follow Samson's lead. "Well, since we're all here, Mr. Ellington, perhaps we can go over the details now?" "No way, Samson!" Chloe whined, clutching his arm. "You promised you'd sing with me tonight. Don't start talking about business now." Marcus joined in, laughing lightly. "She's right, Mr. Ortega. We all work hard. Tonight should be a break. Ms. Lamb, since you're already here, have a drink first. We can handle business later." Samson's lips curved. His gaze at Marcus held a deeper meaning. "Mr. Ellington may not be aware. Our largest shareholder is Ms. Lamb.

Her word outranks mine. Since she came in person, I can't use your invitation as an excuse to ignore her wishes." In one move, Samson placed all decision-making squarely onto my shoulders. Marcus's expression shifted. He immediately turned to me, voice more respectful than before. "Ms. Lamb, would you honor us? Please, sit down and have a drink. We'll follow your lead on the collaboration." He didn't wait for my answer. He guided me toward the empty seat beside Samson and gently pushed me down. I tried to protest, but Marcus had already ordered more wine, not giving me any chance to escape.

I sat stiffly, unsure what to do. I peeked at Samson. He was already looking at me. His eyes held reassurance and just a hint of teasing. And in that moment, I understood

exactly what he meant. ... 2/2 18:14 Wed, Dec 31 M ... Chapter 163 Lines in the Dark  
Chapter 163 Lines in the Dark Amanda's POV: : (33) +30 Free Coins Samson had done it on purpose. He pulled me into this business meeting for two reasons. First, my shareholder status forced Marcus to drop the excuse of accompanying Chloe and focus on the collaboration. Second, it saved me from walking out in humiliation.

Staying here suddenly became reasonable, even natural. "Ms. Lamb, a toast to you." Marcus handed me a glass of red wine. My fingers brushed the cold glass, and I realized my palms were sweating. Before I could lift it, Samson reached over, took the wine from my hand, and finished it in one clean tilt of his head. His voice was calm. "Ms. Lamb doesn't drink well. I'll drink for her." Chloe's expression darkened instantly. Her grip on her own glass tightened. Marcus, however, just laughed. "Mr. Ortega really takes care of Ms. Lamb.

Since she can't drink, we'll switch to juice." I gave Samson a grateful glance, but he had already turned away, speaking to Marcus about meaningless pleasantries-as if shielding me from alcohol were nothing. But then I noticed his hand on his knee shift closer to my side. His voice, quiet enough that only I could hear, brushed my ear. "I'll find an excuse to get you out of here soon." Alice clicked her tongue. "This man is way too attentive. But that Chloe girl looks ready to breathe fire at you. Better watch your back." I didn't respond, only gave the faintest nod.

In my peripheral vision, Chloe watched me closely. Her lips curved politely, but her eyes overflowed with hostility. That lounge mishap wasn't going to end easily. It wasn't hard to guess why. Samson protected me once, and she reacted like a possessive little cat. But even when she glared, her cheeks puffed, and her lashes fluttered like tiny fans. On her, anger looked soft, almost cute. Alice groaned. "Oh please. Are you getting maternal now? She was ready to tear you apart two 1/2 Mark

Chapter 163 Lines in the Dark minutes ago." I ignored Alice's grumbling and instead found Chloe oddly adorable. (33) +30 Free Coins If it weren't for this awkward tie to Samson, I might've actually gone over and made friends with her. She was sweet and straightforward, way more likable than those people who hide all their thoughts. Meanwhile, Marcus and Samson continued discussing the energy crystal partnership between Eclipse Pack and Frostveil Pack. The words were polite, but the tone was full of subtle testing and caution. I checked my phone. A message from Emily popped up.

"Amanda, where are you? We finished a whole song and you're still gone. Don't tell me you got lost." I quickly replied. "Room 308. Something came up, but I'm fine. I'll be back soon." Just as I hit send-Bang! The private room door flew open. Jennifer marched in like a commander, Clara and Emily close behind, all three radiating murderous intent. Jennifer scanned the room once. Her gaze turned icy. In two strides, she was in front of me. "Amanda, are they holding you here?" Emily's tiny fists clenched, her hair almost sparking.

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"If anyone bullied Amanda, they can fight me next!" I was shocked and touched all at once. "No, no, I'm okay! I just ... walked into the wrong room." Marcus had been frowning at the sudden intrusion, but when he saw the three girls clearly, his eyes lit up. His businessman demeanor evaporated, replaced by a careless grin. "Ms. Lamb, are these your friends? As expected, someone impressive always travels with equally impressive company." "None of your business." Jennifer stepped forward, placing herself between me and everyone else.

"Amanda, let's go." I immediately rose and followed her toward the door. "Wait." Marcus hurried after us, blocking the exit, spinning his phone between his fingers. His eyes weren't on me. They were on the person standing right behind me. 2/2 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M... Mark

Chapter 164 The Alpha Who Wouldn't Take No Amanda's POV: A (33) +30 Free Coins I followed Marcus's gaze and looked behind me. The moment I saw Jennifer, I understood exactly what he was planning. Sure enough, he spoke up right away. "Don't rush off, ladies. A few pretty girls squeezed in a tiny room is no fun. Why not merge your room with ours? Drinks and snacks on me. Let's liven things up." "No need." Jennifer stepped aside to avoid his reaching hand. Her eyes were full of disgust. "We don't know you, and we're not joining whatever this is." Marcus didn't get angry.

Instead, he leaned forward again, voice dropping into something meant to be playful. "Now that sounds too distant. Even if we're not familiar, following each other on Instagram isn't a big deal, right? I promise, I won't message you anything besides the weather." That was the last straw. Jennifer shoved him away, and the force wasn't light. "Please have some self-respect. I'm not interested in playboys, and I'm even less interested in following strangers on Instagram." "Playboy?" Marcus raised a brow, more amused than offended. "And how exactly do I look like a playboy?

I'm a very loyal man." "In every way possible." Jennifer grabbed my wrist. Her voice was cold and firm. "Amanda, we're leaving." "Wait!" Marcus didn't block us this time. Instead, he called after our backs. "My name is Marcus Ellington. And if I'm not mistaken, you must be Jennifer Sadler of Frostveil Pack's alpha line. I won't forget you!" Jennifer didn't pause for even half a second. She pulled us straight out the door. Inside the elevator, she finally exhaled and looked at me. "He didn't bother you, right?

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We heard men talking inside and thought you were getting pushed around." "No, thanks to you all showing up on time." I laughed and nudged her arm. "But the way you shut Marcus down was ... incredible." Clara slipped in beside us, eyes sparkling with gossip. "Marcus Ellington. The alpha of Frostveil Pack. That guy is infamous for flirting. Who knew he'd get roasted by our Jennifer! Did you see 1/2 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 164 The Alpha Who Wouldn't Take No his face?

He was practically glued to you." 33 +30 Free Coins "Don't talk nonsense." A faint blush crept up Jennifer's cheeks as she looked away. "I just don't like his sleazy attitude." Emily suddenly pointed at the elevator door. "Amanda... Mr. Ortega looks like he's following us." My heart jumped. I turned-and sure enough, Samson stood at the end of the hallway, holding my backpack. I must have left it behind in the room. He didn't walk over. He just watched us from a distance, his gaze steady and unreadable. The elevator doors slid shut.

His figure grew smaller, and something unsettled twisted in my chest. When we returned to our private room, Clara and Emily immediately crowded around, demanding details about what happened in Room 308. I explained most of it, skipping the part where I'd seen Samson and Chloe looking ... close. "Didn't expect Mr. Ortega to be that protective," Clara teased. "When he drank that wine for you, wasn't he super cool?" My cheeks warmed. I opened my mouth to deny it-but my phone rang. It was an unknown number. Caller ID: Frostveil Pack. I hesitated for a second, then answered. 2/2 33(33)  
Mark

Chapter 165 Lines Crossed Amanda's POV: +30 Free Coins "Hello, is this Ms. Lamb?" Marcus's voice slid through the phone, smug even across the speaker. "Don't hang up, don't hang up. I'm not calling to bother you. Mr. Ortega asked me to tell that the documents for the collaboration between Eclipse Pack and Frostveil Pack will be delivered to you tomorrow. you "And ... could you give me your friend's Instagram?" The speakers in the lounge had just turned off, so the phone sounded extra clear. That last sentence hit like a thunderclap, making the whole room fall silent in an instant.

Clara and Emily whipped their heads toward Jennifer, eyes shining like they had found treasure. "Pfft-" Clara burst out laughing, slapping the couch. "Marcus is something else. He flirts faster than he negotiates!" Emily nodded so hard her ponytail bounced. "Jennifer, even a notorious flirt like him fell for you. That's talent!" Jennifer's face flushed instantly. She snatched my phone and hung up, glaring at us. "He didn't fall for anything. He's used to girls throwing themselves at him, so when he meets resistance, he finds it refreshing. A guy like that is unreliable.

I'm not interested." "Sure, sure. Totally uninterested." Clara leaned in and poked her cheek. "When he called your name, your ears turned red!" "I was annoyed, not shy!" Jennifer slapped her hand away, then suddenly turned to me, eyes narrowing in mischievous suspicion. "Don't just talk about me. Amanda, what's going on between you, Samson, and Derrick? One shields you from everything, the other professes undying love. What is this, a love triangle?" "I'm not in any love triangle." I waved both hands, cheeks burning. "We're just friends. What happened with Derrick was a misunderstanding.

And Samson is ... just someone I work with for Eclipse Pack." "Right. Ordinary friends who block drinks for you and pick up your backpack." Clara arched a brow, not believing a word. 1/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 165 Lines Crossed Ø & 33 ) +30 Free Coins I opened my mouth to explain, but the door slid open. Samson stood there, tall and

calm, no visible emotion on his face. "It's late. Time to go home." The room froze. Clara and Emily instantly shut up and nudged me forward. I grabbed my backpack, greeted him stiffly, and followed him out. The car was warm, but I felt cold and uncomfortable.

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My head kept replaying what I saw in the lounge-Chloe holding his arm, leaning on his shoulder. Something soft and heavy clogged my chest. Alice sighed in my mind. "Say it or you'll explode. You look like a little wolf pup nursing a wounded heart." I bit my lip, then finally asked, "Samson ... why were you acting so close with Chloe?" His hand paused on the steering wheel. He glanced at me, surprised. "You misunderstood." "I didn't misunderstand." I turned away, watching the streetlights blur past. "I saw it clearly. She kissed your cheek. She held your arm.

And you didn't move away." "I don't like Chloe." His voice was calm, carrying a kind of certainty that couldn't be challenged. That single sentence was like a lit match, setting off the fire in my chest all at once. I whipped around. "You don't like her? Then why act like that? She's still a kid. She'll misunderstand. You're letting her think you care about her. That hurts, Samson. Don't you get it?" Samson hit the brakes. The car rolled to a stop at the side of the road. He turned toward me, expression serious. "Chloe is Marcus's sister. She's Frostveil Pack's little treasure.

Marcus has been hesitant about the energy crystal deal. Being gentle with Chloe helps him relax his guard. It's business for Eclipse Pack." "So business means you're allowed to play with someone's feelings?" I frowned, heart pounding. "She really likes you. What you're doing feels like lying to her." His mouth opened as if trying to explain himself-then closed again. Finally he sighed. "I'll make things clear to her." But it still didn't sit right with me.

In my world, hurting someone's heart was never "just 2/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 165 Lines Crossed business." I stopped talking and turned back to the window. Silence filled the car again. Only the hum of the heater remained. He dropped me off at the estate. I didn't say goodnight. I just went inside. 33 +30 Free Coins Upstairs, I washed off my disguise and took a long hot shower. My nerves slowly unknotted. Fresh out of the bathroom, hair dripping, towel in hand, a notification pinged from my laptop. I walked over and lit up the screen. It was a message sent to my "Sara" account.

It was from Samson. "Ms. Cobbett, the Isnesh language representative will arrive in Alexandria tomorrow. I will send staff to accompany you. Please pick her up at the airport. I'll forward the flight details soon." I stared at the screen, my fingers hovering over the keyboard, my chest twisted into a knot. Logic told me I was still angry at Samson and didn't want anything to do with him. But as Sara, I had signed a contract with him. Keeping my word was the bare minimum, and this was tied to the Isnesh language program. I couldn't treat it like a joke. Alice clicked her tongue.

"Business is business. Don't let personal emotions ruin your job. And you still need this identity to stay close to him ... for stabilizing my power, remember?" I exhaled slowly. Then typed a reply, "Noted." The message sent. And just like that, the fire in my chest dimmed. Not gone. Just softened into a helpless, reluctant acceptance. 3/3 1 Mark

Chapter 166 Lines Drawn Samson's POV: Amanda didn't slam the car door very hard, yet it hit my chest like a hammer. +30 Free Coins I stayed in the driver's seat, unmoving, watching her walk toward the castle. The porch lights stretched her shadow long and thin, carrying a quiet kind of stubbornness. My fingers brushed the steering wheel as her angry expression replayed in my mind. Only now did it sink in. I had been wrong. Using Chloe's feelings to steady Marcus was the quickest business strategy, a common practice in pack negotiations.

But to Amanda, that was trampling on someone's sincerity. She protected Chloe because Chloe's feelings were simple and pure. And I had shattered that purity. I opened my messages with Chloe and typed, "Chloe, about the negotiations. I used your goodwill. I'm sorry. My attitude toward you is only friendly. Please don't misunderstand." Once sent, the tightness in my chest eased slightly. Another message popped up from my team. "Mr. Ortega, Amy Ashford from Isnesh Pack has confirmed arrival at 10 a.m. tomorrow. Flight details attached. She is bringing five people.

Main agenda is language adaptation for the energy crystal trade." I put away my thoughts and opened the chat window with Sara. This mysterious Isnesh language teacher worked efficiently and stayed discreet. She was the best person to receive Amy. After confirming the arrangements, I drove straight to the Operations Department to finalize the prep work. Amanda's POV: The next morning, I left the castle with a backpack stuffed with clothes and makeup. I stopped at a mall restroom three kilometers away and spent 10 minutes changing. 1/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M...

Chapter 166 Lines Drawn (33 ) +30 Free Coins The yellowish sickly makeup came off. A crisp cream suit replaced my hoodie. A light, professional makeup look completed the shift. The mirror no longer reflected a plain student. It showed Sara, the sharp and polished Isnesh language specialist. When I arrived at the airport, the flight was due in 20 minutes. Holding an "Amy Ashford" sign, I waited at the exit. Just as I pulled out my phone, a group with rolling suitcases walked out. Leading them was a blonde woman in a red suit, aura sharp enough to slice glass. It was Amy. "Hello, Ms.

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Ashford, welcome. I've been waiting for you." I walked up quickly and greeted her in fluent Isnesh, my pronunciation so precise even I was a little impressed. Amy turned around, her emerald eyes sweeping over me from head to toe. She gave my hand a brief, polite shake, her fingertips cool to the touch. "My team is still picking up their luggage. We can head out first." Her accent was noticeable but clear. I nodded and guided her toward the exit. We reached the main hall when she glanced at me, a teasing smile blooming. "So, Mr. Ortega didn't come?

I thought I'd finally meet the legendary heir of Eclipse Pack." "Mr. Ortega had urgent matters. He'll come shortly. I'll take you to the hotel first." I kept the smile professional. No problem. Amy waved it off, then leaned closer with a conspiratorial grin. "Please remind him to bring the red wine he promised. I've been thinking about it for half a month." Red wine? My heart thumped. Samson never mentioned this. But face didn't show it. "Of course, Ms. Ashford. I'll pass the message." At the hotel, Cody's team was already waiting to receive them.

While checking in, Amy added casually, "I'll need two room cards." I didn't ask why. I just retrieved the extra card from the front desk. At her door, she accepted the cards and gave me a meaningful look. "Thank you, Ms. Cobbett. When Mr. Ortega arrives, do let me know." After she closed the door, I messaged Samson immediately-about the red wine request, the two key cards, and everything else she had mentioned. 2/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 166 Lines Drawn (33) +30 Free Coins Before he replied, I went to the café on the first floor and waited.

I couldn't risk Samson showing up and not finding me. Two cups of coffee later, my phone buzzed. It was message from Samson. "I'm at the hotel entrance. Meet me in the restaurant." I joined him, lowering my voice. "Mr. Ortega." He nodded and asked. "Has Ms. Ashford come down?" "We arranged for six o'clock. She should be on her way," I answered. Samson checked his watch, then stood. "Go to my car and get her wine. It's in the glove compartment." I grabbed the keys and hurried to the parking lot. When I came back with the bottle, Amy was already seated opposite Samson.

Sunlight streaming through the glass framed them like a magazine spread. "Mr. Ortega, Ms. Ashford, here is the wine." I set it down. Amy's eyes flicked to the label. She smiled, switching seamlessly to English. "Velmont Estate's limited edition. Mr. Ortega, this must have been expensive. I couldn't even find one back in Isnesh." I froze. She spoke English fluently? The whole time she'd been using Isnesh with me-I thought she didn't know other languages. Samson replied smoothly in English. "As long as Ms.

Ashford likes it." He continued, "We appreciate your coming to Alexandria for this collaboration. With our mutual needs aligned, I believe this partnership will be successful." He had barely finished half his sentence when Amy raised her hand and cut him off. She picked up the lemon water on the table, took a slow sip, and a complicated look flashed in her emerald eyes. "Mr. Ortega," she said unhurriedly, "I actually didn't have to come here at all, but..." 3/3 1 Mark

Chapter 167 Hot Springs and Hidden Intentions Amanda's POV: 33 +30 Free Coins Amy's emerald eyes curved like a crescent moon, her gaze lingering on Samson with open flirtation. "But there is one very tempting reason that makes me look forward to this trip to Alexandria even more." She drew out her words on purpose, her fingertips tracing the rim of her glass. "As for work, I just crossed most of Howlstead and the jet lag is still killing me. We can talk later. Mr. Ortega, since you are the host, do you have any fun activities to help me relax?" Samson stayed steady. "Does Ms.

Ashford have anything in mind?" "I have heard a lot about the hot springs at Stonefang Ridge. People say they are the best in Alexandria." Amy gave a sultry smile and leaned forward. "Why don't we go soak together tomorrow?" The cup in my hand froze. She was not here to talk business at all. She was using work as an excuse to get close to Samson. "As long as Ms. Ashford likes it, I will have my team arrange it right away." Samson's answer was smooth and safe. Amy clapped her hands in delight and turned to me. "Bring Ms. Cobbett with us.

She can help translate whenever we discuss work." The sudden gesture caught me off guard. I could only look toward Samson. He lifted his eyes to me. His gaze was calm and unreadable. "Sure. It is easier with one more person." On the way back, the more I thought about it, the more uneasy I felt. Amy was fair-skinned and beautiful, with blond hair and bright green eyes. When she smiled, she looked like a rose with thorns-exactly the type of woman men were drawn to. Samson was a normal man. Having someone like her showing interest in him would definitely stir something in him.

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The moment that thought appeared, my chest tightened. Even Alice's complaints could not break through my mood. 1/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M. A 33 Chapter 167 Hot Springs and Hidden Intentions. +30 Free Coins The next morning, I arrived at the hotel as Sara. Amy was already waiting with her staff. "Ms. Cobbett, thank you for waiting." She wore an ivory dress today, less sharp than yesterday, softer and more charming. "I just got here," I said with a polite smile, leading her to the car so we could head to the meeting point Samson picked. But as soon as the car stopped, I froze.

Josh and Alan were standing next to Samson's car. My heart jumped to my throat. I instinctively hid behind Amy. Those two knew my real identity too well. If they recognized that Sara was actually me, it would be a disaster. Josh's POV: Alan and I had been drowning in work and classes these past few days. We were just planning to take a quick trip somewhere when Samson called. He told us to come accompany clients to the hot springs and discuss a partnership. Looking at Samson's serious face, Alan and I exchanged a long look. Both of us were thinking the same thing.

There went our chance to relax. "If I knew we were doing business, I would've stayed home and worked on my music," Alan grumbled, kicking a pebble. "Be grateful. It is still better than spreadsheets," I said, patting his shoulder. Just then, a car rolled to a stop. A woman stepped out first in an ivory suit. She was slim and graceful, adjusting her skirt with her back to us. That silhouette... Why did it look like Amanda? My eyes brightened. I tugged on Alan's arm. "Look. Isn't that Amanda?" Alan followed my gaze, then snorted. "You must be losing it.

The back looks similar, that's it." As soon as he finished speaking, the woman turned around. Her face was delicate but unfamiliar. A high nose bridge, pale lips, nothing like Amanda's masked and wax-yellow disguise. My excitement vanished. "Yeah ... I completely got it wrong. It was just the build that looked like her." "I told you-you're

obsessed," Alan said, smacking me lightly. "If she heard you, she'd probably beat you up." 2/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M... Chapter 167 Hot Springs and Hidden Intentions. I opened my mouth to argue, but then Samson walked up to greet the women.

33 +30 Free Coins The unfamiliar woman walked beside Amy, and she spoke in fluent Spanish, her voice lowered on purpose ... yet there was a hint of something familiar. Was she really not Amanda? 3/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Mark

Chapter 168 A Confession Nobody Expected Amanda's POV: 33 +30 Free Coins The changing room at the hot springs smelled faintly of essential oils. I had just taken off my blazer when Amy leaned in. "Ms. Cobbett, you have been around Mr. Ortega for a while. Do you know if he has a girlfriend?" She put on lipstick in front of the mirror, but her eyes watched me through the reflection. My hands paused as I folded my clothes. I kept a professional smile. "Sorry, Ms. Ashford. I only handle translation. I am not familiar with Mr. Ortega's personal life." Amy clearly was not giving up.

She set down her lipstick and stepped closer. "We are just chatting. A man like Mr. Ortega must have someone amazing beside him, right?" Her fingertip brushed my sleeve, her tone overly friendly. "I really don't know." I shifted away a little, letting my tone grow firmer. "I am only a translator. It is not my place to ask about my employer's private matters." That drew the line clearly. The smile on Amy's face faded a bit. She shrugged. "Alright. I was being rude." Then she picked up her robe and walked out of the room. I had just tied the belt of my robe when a sharp scream echoed outside.

"Ahh... Snake!" It was Amy. My heart lurched. I grabbed the nearest pair of slip-resistant shoes and dashed out. Amy was curled up against the wall in the hallway, her face pale. She pointed ahead with trembling hands. A spotted snake, about two feet long, was coiled on the floor, flicking its tongue. All her usual confidence and charm were gone. Her eyes were wet with fear and she bit her lip hard. "Don't be scared!" I shouted. My gaze swept the corner and spotted a mop. I grabbed it and sprinted forward. 1/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M.

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Chapter 168 A Confession Nobody Expected The snake jerked at the noise, lifted its head, and shot toward Amy. 32 +30 Free Coins I didn't think. I kicked right at the spot below its head. The force sent the snake flying into the wall. It hit hard and fell limp. "You okay? It didn't bite you, right?" I knelt beside her. She was shaking all over. As soon as she saw me, she lunged into my arms, crying into my shoulder. "I was so scared... I have been afraid of snakes since I was a kid..." Alice clicked her tongue in my head. "The contrast is wild.

One second she is flirting with Samson, the next she is a crying kitten. Are you saving her like that? She is never forgetting this." I patted Amy's back to calm her. I had just opened my mouth to say "It's fine" when footsteps rushed up behind us. I turned. Samson, Josh, and Alan had all run over. They froze at the scene. The usually calm

translator was holding a sobbing representative from the Isnesh Pack, and a fainted snake lay on the floor. "What happened?" Samson hurried over. His eyes first checked me from head to toe, then moved to Amy.

"Are you hurt?" Amy lifted her head from my shoulder, eyes red. "No ... thanks to Ms. Cobbett." Her gaze returned to me with clear dependence. Josh scratched his head, stunned. "Ms. Cobbett, you are incredible. You kicked the snake with one hit. Stronger than us." Alan nodded. "Yeah. That did not look like normal translator strength." away My stomach tightened. I quickly explained. "Back home, we see snakes all the time. You get used to dealing with them. Let's take Ms. Ashford to the hot spring so she can calm down." Samson didn't speak.

He only gave me a long look, the suspicion in his eyes growing stronger. We moved everyone to the hot spring area. Josh and Alan slipped into a smaller pool nearby, leaving us three to talk. Warm water rose around our legs. Amy finally relaxed and took a sip of juice. While she wasn't looking, I quietly leaned toward Samson and whispered, "She seems very interested in you." 2/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 168 A Confession Nobody Expected Samson turned his head slightly and gave a small nod.

32 +30 Free Coins Sure enough, a few minutes later Amy smoothed her hair, put on a shy expression, and looked at Samson. "Mr. Ortega, I want to ask you something..." Before she could finish, Samson spoke first. His tone was polite but distant. "Ms. Ashford, if this is about personal feelings, I don't think we need to talk about that. Let's focus on the partnership." He clearly came prepared to turn her down. He didn't even give her a chance to hope. I agreed silently. Samson finally learned not to lead people on. But the next second, Amy's words froze me on the spot.

Amy blinked, then laughed softly. Not her usual seductive smile, but something relieved. She turned toward me. Her emerald eyes shone with seriousness. "Mr. Ortega misunderstood. I was not going to ask him." She took a breath. Her voice rang clearly across the pool. "After what happened earlier, I realized I no longer have feelings for Mr. Ortega. Ms. Cobbett, I like being with me?" What? With ... me? you. Would you consider 3/3 Mark

Chapter 169 A Kiss, a Secret, and New Energy Chapter 169 A Kiss, a Secret, and New Energy Amanda's POV: 32(32) +30 Free Coins Josh was the first to break. He had just taken a sip of juice when he choked and sprayed it out. Alan almost stood up in the water. I stayed frozen, my mind blank. Even Alice went silent. But the reaction that shocked me most came from Samson. His hand stopped midair with the glass still in it. His eyes were full of disbelief, and the look he gave me was so complicated it felt like he was seeing someone completely different. Amy was still watching me with hope.

I opened my mouth, but no sound came out. My cheeks were burning hot. My brain rebooted after a full three seconds before I finally found my voice. Facing Amy's bright green eyes, I tried to keep my tone gentle but firm. "Ms. Ashford, I'm sorry. I'm not planning to date anyone right now, whether men or women." Amy's expression dimmed

a little, but she didn't look as hurt as I expected. Instead, she raised a brow and straightened up, her wet blond hair sticking to her shoulders. She still looked bold and dazzling. "It's fine.

I like people who love bravely, and I respect other people's choices." Alice reappeared, confused. "This woman ... is interesting. Also, I sensed a faint energy wave just now. Strange." I was about to ask when Amy suddenly turned to Samson. Her smile sharpened with confidence. "But Mr. Ortega, I do have one condition. For the partnership between Eclipse Pack and Isnesh Pack, the translator must be Ms. Cobbett. If someone else handles it, I will have to reconsider the deal." Samson finally moved. He took a sip of water, then looked at me.

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His eyes grew even more unreadable, like he was trying to figure something out. A moment later, he turned to Amy. His voice was steady. "As long as Ms. Ashford is satisfied, the translator is fine." I couldn't help letting out a laugh. Amy was really something. Couldn't get the girl, so she used a partnership to keep me close. It was surprisingly straightforward. She shot me a proud look. I nodded helplessly. "Of course. That is my job." 1/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M... Chapter 169 A Kiss, a Secret, and New Energy After that, the rest of the meeting went smoothly.

49 (32) +30 Free Coins With the flirting gone, Amy became sharp and organized. Even Samson complimented her professionalism. I sat beside them translating. Every time I looked up, I ran into Samson's gaze. He kept watching me like a spotlight, making me uneasy. By sunset, the partnership details were finalized. Amy's staff loaded her luggage into the car. She walked up to me and opened her arms. "Ms. Cobbett, even though we can't be together, I'm glad we met." I blinked in surprise, then hugged her back. The next second, she suddenly kissed me on the cheek.

Her lips were soft and carried a faint fruity scent. "It's a goodbye kiss. Don't mind it." She stepped back with a smile and waved. "Once the then." partnership starts, I'll come to Eclipse Pack again. I'll find you "Wait..." I hadn't even processed the kiss when Alice suddenly yelled in my mind. "Energy! I felt a clean burst of energy just now. Not much, but very unique. Something is off with this woman!" My heart tightened. I glanced at Amy, who was already opening the car door. She shot me a playful gesture before ducking inside. The car soon disappeared down the mountain road.

"Do you need a ride back?" Samson's voice behind me cut off my thoughts. He had changed back into a suit. The top two buttons were still undone, but his gaze was much heavier than before. "No, I'll just call a cab." I waved quickly. I needed to get home and think. I did not want to be alone with him right now. Samson didn't insist. He simply handed me a folder. "This is the supplementary agreement. Keep a copy." My fingers accidentally brushed his when I took it. His skin was cool. I jolted like I'd been shocked and pulled my hand back, muttering a quick thanks before walking away.

Josh called after me. "Ms. Cobbett, let's train together sometime. Your reflexes are insane!" I didn't dare turn back. I just waved. 2/3 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 169 A Kiss, a Secret, and New Energy 32 +30 Free Coins By the time I returned to Ortega Castle, night had fallen. I removed Sara's disguise, changed into my own clothes, and curled up on the couch. Amy's confession, that sudden kiss, the energy Alice sensed, and Samson's reactions all swirled in my head. I rubbed my temples. And then there was Samson. This time, facing Amy's interest, he didn't act vague like he did with Chloe.

He drew a clear line. That was surprising. I opened the email linked to my Sara account. Samson had already sent over the partnership files. As my finger slid across the screen, I remembered his words by the hot spring. "Trust me. I won't." A ripple of something strange and quiet spread in my chest. While I sat there thinking, morning light crept through the window and landed on the folder. I took a deep breath. Keeping Alice's energy stable was what mattered most now. 3/3 अपर 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M ... A Mark

Chapter 170 Racing Plans and Quiet Changes Chapter 170 Racing Plans and Quiet Changes Amanda's POV: +30 Free Coins I barely slept all night. When I looked in the mirror the next morning, two dark circles were hanging under my eyes. I ran my fingers through my hair twice, gave up on fixing it, and dragged myself downstairs for breakfast. Just as I reached the dining room, I almost bumped into Samson walking out with a cup of coffee. He was wearing light gray loungewear with the sleeves rolled up to his forearms. The moment he saw me, his hand paused midair.

He looked uneasy as he said, "Good morning." His nervous look threw me off for a second. Then I remembered how firmly he rejected Amy at the hot spring, and a small warmth spread through my chest. I gave him a natural smile. "Good morning, Mr. Ortega." After breakfast, he spoke first. "I'll drive you to school. It's on my way to the Operations Department." In the car, he held the steering wheel with one hand and said casually, "A funny thing happened yesterday with the representatives from Isnesh Pack. Ms.

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Ashford actually confessed to my translator in front of everyone." My hand paused on my cup. I forced a surprised tone. "Really? Didn't that make you uncomfortable?" "No." He glanced at me, his eyes serious. "She turned her down right away. Told her we should keep things professional." I couldn't help laughing. "That's good. Better than letting someone hope for nothing. Was your translator scared?" "Not at all. She actually comforted Amy afterward." There was a quiet note of admiration in his voice. "And she's strong. Amy ran into a snake yesterday, and she kicked it away in one move.

Even Josh couldn't react that fast." My heart tightened. I quickly changed the topic. "Sounds like your translator is excellent. You've found the right person." He didn't reply. He only looked at me through the rearview mirror, his gaze filled with deeper curiosity. 1/2 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M... : Chapter 170 Racing Plans and Quiet Changes A 32 +30

Free Coins I pretended not to notice and turned to the window. He was trying, in his own clumsy way, to show me he was changing. Soon, we arrived at the entrance of the Werewolf Language Academy. I thanked him and hurried out of the car.

The moment I stepped through the gates, someone grabbed my wrist and pulled me under a tree. "Boss, it's me!" Theo yanked off his cap, grinning with excitement. "What's going on?" His sneaky look made me curious. "Mooncrest Pack's annual racing championship is next weekend! It's the biggest racing event in all of Howlstead." He waved a flyer in front of me. "I saved you front-row tickets. Want to go?" Racing... My heart skipped. Alice perked up. "Go. Go! The energy at racetracks is wild. It might help me stabilize my power." "Okay, I'll go." I took the flyer, my fingertips feeling warm.

"I'll contact you before the event." Theo didn't expect me to agree so quickly. He slapped my shoulder happily. "Great! Boss, see you there!" He glanced around nervously, pulled his cap down again, and whispered, "I'm heading out. If my brother finds out I skipped training to see you, he'll yell at me all day." He ran off just in time for Jennifer to come bouncing over, waving a schedule. "Amanda! I got into the image management class at the Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department! It starts next Wednesday. Can you go with me?" "Of course." I smiled and nodded.

But when my eyes fell on the words Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department, my mind drifted. Because this time, I had something important to do there. 2/2 Mark

Chapter 171 The Secret Score Amanda's POV: ୧ ୫ 32 +30 Free Coins The Howlstead Foreign Affairs Department building looked strict and formal. I walked Jennifer to the door of her image management class, waited until she greeted the instructor and went inside, then quietly slipped away toward the end of the hall. I hurried up to the third floor and peeked down the corridor. Samson's office door opened a crack. No lights were on. It looked like he wasn't here. I took a deep breath, crouched down, dashed over, pushed the door open, and slipped inside. I closed it gently behind me.

The whole move took only three seconds. The office was silent. Papers were stacked neatly on the desk. I pulled out the revised music sheet from my bag. I had stayed up two nights to finish it, fixing the melody and marking rhythm cues that matched wolf-spirit energy waves. I didn't say anything out loud. I set the score on the center of his desk where he would see it right away and pressed it down with a paperweight so it wouldn't shift. After that, I scanned the room to make sure I hadn't left any trace. Then I opened the door slowly and slipped out just as carefully as I came.

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Alan's POV: "No update yet?" I slammed the music draft onto the table. The papers snapped loudly. One of my assistants replied, "Mr. Seven said he is still talking to Avi. He asked us to wait a little longer." "Wait? Wait how long?" I stood up sharply, the chair scraping back loudly. "Avi stopped writing three years ago. After the Glacier Pack incident, she disappeared from the public eye. Why would she suddenly agree to help

us?" The thought of losing the ambassador position and the wave of negative comments online made me want to break something.

"We already raised the payment to seven figures and offered her permanent VIP status at Eclipse Pack. But Mr. Seven says ... Avi doesn't care about any of that." His voice grew smaller. "He said she quit because she hated being pushed around by commercial interests. Trying to lure her with money might only offend her." 1/2 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 171 The Secret Score 32 +30 Free Coins "Hates commercial interest?" I let out a harsh laugh and grabbed my coffee, swallowing a bit of a mouthful. "Who doesn't care about profit these days?" But I knew the truth.

Avi's "Wolf-Soul Whispers" really was pure music. No business packaging at all. Even now, that song remained the standard for soothing melodies across all of Howlstead. "Instead of waiting for charity, I'll write it myself!" I slammed the cup down. Coffee splashed onto the documents. "I refuse to believe that without Avi, I can't compose a decent soothing melody!" My assistant opened his mouth, then shut it again. Finally he whispered, "Mr. Ortega, you've stayed up three nights in a row. Maybe rest first?"

The Operations Department still has partnership papers waiting for your signature." I waved him off impatiently. "Leave me alone. Don't bother me." He didn't dare say more. He picked up the fallen documents, slipped out quietly, and closed the door behind him. The office went silent. I slumped into the chair, gripping my hair as my mind went blank. The melodies I'd written circled in my head, but something was missing. They felt like bodies without souls. I opened my laptop and pulled up the half-finished composition that Seven sent me. My fingers tapped the keyboard aimlessly.

What am I supposed to do... 2/2 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M... Mark

Chapter 172 Flights, Feelings, and a Crush Samson's POV: A32 +30 Free Coins I finished sorting the documents on my desk. Just as my fingers touched the mouse, a message alert popped up on my phone. Sara's icon lit up on the screen. Her usual minimalist Isnesh-letter design looked clean and distant, just like her. "Mr. Ortega, sorry for the interruption. I have some urgent personal matters to handle. I may need to pause the online Isnesh language lessons for the next two weeks. I'll let you know in advance when I can resume." My fingertip hovered over the screen for two seconds.

The memory of Amy confessing in front of everyone at the hot spring suddenly flashed through my mind. I frowned without meaning to. She must still be bothered by that sudden confession and needed time to calm down. I typed back, "No problem. Personal matters come first. If you need help with anything, feel free to tell me." "Mr. Ortega, the Operations Department schedule is confirmed." The office door opened and my deputy, Cody, walked in with a folder. "Mooncrest Pack's Mooncrest Cup Racing Championship opens next week. Your flight is booked for next Friday, nine in the morning.

Two Operations assistants will accompany you." Mooncrest Cup. The name made me look up. It was the biggest racing event in all of Howlstead. Talented racers from every

region, but the real reason packs gathered there was business. It was less a race and more a hub for hidden negotiations. The Operations Department had already suggested using this chance to discuss an energy- crystal transport route with Mooncrest Pack. I had planned to do it anyway, so the timing worked out perfectly. Besides, I couldn't shake the feeling that I would see Læm there.

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Amanda's POV: Sunlight spilled across my hand as the plane broke through the clouds. Warm. Soft. 1/2 18:15 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 172 Flights, Feelings, and a Crush 32 +30 Free Coins I adjusted the loose hair around my face using a small mirror. This time, I didn't wear that wax-yellow disguise. I came as myself. Theo had been staring at me for a while, He finally blurted, "Boss, with a face like yours you could live off your looks. Why do you insist on dressing like a country bumpkin? What's the point?" He had asked this question at least 10 times.

I laughed and brushed my hair back, looking out at the drifting clouds. "Peace and quiet." When the plane landed, the warm air of Mooncrest Pack washed over us. It was much hotter than the Eclipse Pack. Orange-blossom trees lined the streets, filling the air with sweet fragrance. Theo's men were already waiting outside the airport. But from the moment we stepped out, Theo turned strangely attentive. He carried my backpack. Handed me water. He took my sun umbrella before I could lift it. He hovered around me like I was a VIP. His behavior was so unusual it made me suspicious.

Once we were in the car, I finally elbowed him lightly. "Tell me. What do you want from me? You're fussing over me more than when you begged me to rewrite your racing theme." Theo's ears turned red instantly. He scratched his head, avoiding my gaze. He hesitated for a long moment before mumbling, "Amanda ... I... I think I like a girl." Oh? Theo has a crush? 2/2 Mark

Chapter 173 The Estate of Lavender and Secrets Amanda's POV: Theo leaned close and whispered a whole bunch of details. 32 +30 Free Coins The moment I heard that familiar name, I couldn't help smiling. Seeing his eyes shine like that, I curved my lips. "Okay. I'll help however I can. But when it comes to confessing, that part is on you." Theo pounded his chest. "I know! I just need your big-name reputation to open the door for me!" When he dropped me off at the estate road, he added, "If you need anything, just call me.

I know the Mooncrest Pack like the back of my hand." The car drove through a shaded path lined with camphor trees that blocked out the sky. Only when the familiar carved iron gate appeared did I finally relax. This estate was something I bought three years ago, hoping it would be a hideaway I could retreat to occasionally. I didn't expect to leave it untouched for so long. As soon as the car stopped, I stepped out and was wrapped in the scent of grass and trees. For a moment, it felt like I had stepped backward in time. "Ms.

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Lamb!" A slightly raspy female voice came from inside the gate, trembling with excitement. I turned toward it. A woman in a navy apron was hurrying toward me, the loose strands of hair by her cheeks fluttering in the wind. It was Lydia Monroe. The estate's caretaker I hired, and the daughter of one of my mother's old friends. "Lydia." I smiled and walked to her. Her hand brushed my arm, and her eyes instantly turned red. "It's really you! You finally came back!

I've been looking at your photo every day for three years, scared you would never return." "How could I not come back?" I held her arm and walked into the garden. "How is everyone? Did Edith's rheumatism flare up again? And what about Dalton's back injury?" "All good, all good!" Lydia waved both hands quickly, her voice urgent and happy. "Edith tends the garden every day. Her rheumatism has almost disappeared. Dalton recovered last winter and even helps fix the fence now. Oh, and Bubby had a litter of puppies. They'll be a month old soon. They're so fluffy and cute.

Let's go inside and I'll show you!" 1/2 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 173 The Estate of Lavender and Secrets 32 +30 Free Coins As we stepped into the front courtyard, several staff members who had been cleaning saw me and rushed over. "Hello, Ms. Lamb!" "So glad you're back!" I nodded and smiled at each of them. Suddenly something soft brushed my ankle. I looked down. A snow-white Samoyed sat in front of me, tail wagging, staring up with big shiny eyes. "Bubby! You've gotten so big!" I crouched down. He bumped his head into my hand affectionately and let out soft whines.

Three years ago, he was just a tiny puppy. Now he had grown into a majestic, fluffy cloud of a dog. "I cleaned your room every day. The sheets and covers were changed just last week. They smell like sunshine." Lydia took my backpack. "Go rest upstairs. I'll tell the kitchen to make your favorite foie gras." "Thank you, Lydia." I carried Bubby up to the second floor. He squirmed in my arms and, the moment we reached the room, he hopped down and scampered toward the rug by the window. I opened the balcony doors. A lavender field exploded into view. Just like when I left three years ago.

The wind moved across the purple sea of flowers, sending the scent drifting into the room. I leaned against the window, watching the sunset in the distance. For the first time in a long while, the restlessness inside me faded. 2/2 Mark

Chapter 174 The Girl in the Lavender Field Chapter 174 The Girl in the Lavender Field Samson's POV: 32 +30 Free Coin: I checked the address Dalton Reeves sent me. Once I confirmed it was correct, I pressed the brass bell by the gate. The door opened quickly. A maid peeked out. "Sir, who are you looking for?" "Is this Mr. Reeves's residence?" I asked. She brightened. "You must be the honored guest Mr. Reeves mentioned. Samson Ortega from Eclipse Pack?" I nodded. She stepped aside at once. "Mr. Reeves said to bring you in as soon as you arrived. Mr.

Ortega, please board the carriage." "Carriage?" I looked toward the courtyard. A wooden carriage with old-fashioned carvings waited beneath a sycamore tree. A coachman held the reins of a brown horse. "Where exactly are we going?" "Mr. Reeves said the cooperation meeting requires a quiet place. You will understand when you get there." Her tone was apologetic but offered no further explanation. "The carriage is ready. This way, please." I frowned but didn't refuse. Dalton was the key figure controlling Mooncrest Pack's energy-crystal transport routes. This deal was crucial for Eclipse Pack.

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However unusual his methods were, I had to follow through. I ducked into the carriage. The coachman flicked the reins lightly, and we began moving into a bamboo forest. The wheels rolled over fallen leaves, making a soft rustling sound. I didn't know how long we traveled. Eventually, the carriage slowed. "Mr. Ortega, we have arrived," the coachman said. I pushed open the carriage door, and a rich-but not overpowering-scent wrapped around me at once. In front of me stretched an endless lavender field. Purple blooms rolled in the wind like waves in a violet sea.

The golden light of sunset spilled across the flowers, coating each petal with a soft glow. In the distance, a wooden boardwalk curved toward a white gazebo in the center of the field. It looked like someone was sitting beneath it. 1/2 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 174 The Girl in the Lavender Field 32 +30 Free Coins As soon as I stepped onto the walkway, I heard laughter. Crisp, bright, full of energy. It sounded exactly like Amanda when she won sparring matches at the training camp. My steps halted. My heartbeat quickened. I followed the sound almost without thinking.

In the center pavilion, a girl crouched with her back turned, playing with something on the ground. She wore an ivory cotton dress. Her black hair was tied loosely behind her head. A few strands swayed by her neck in the breeze. Just that back view made my chest tighten-her build was almost identical to Amanda's. "Bubby, stop. You'll fall," she said with a soft laugh, turning her head slightly. That was when I saw her face clearly. Snow-pale skin. Bright, clean features. A natural smile tugging at the corners of her lips. It was Amanda without disguise.

- But in the next second, I froze again. The tilt of her head when she spoke, the tiny motion of her fingers tapping the ground... They were exactly like Sara's. Amanda? Or Sara? I stood still, staring at her. Her features were gentler than Sara's. Sara always had a cool distance about her. But the calm, capable aura ... that was unmistakably similar. Sara kicked the snake at the hot spring. Sara's steady hands when passing me documents. Amanda laughing while playing with a dog. All three images overlapped in my mind, tangling my thoughts. Even Charles spoke in a low voice inside me.

"The scent ... it is Amanda's. But the way she moves ... she truly looks like Sara's twin." I took a step forward to confirm her identity and suddenly a white blur launched straight at 2/2 Mark

Chapter 175 Run, Before He Sees the Truth Amanda's POV: 32 +30 Free Coins Bubby burst forward like a gust of wind. I still had a bundle of lavender stems in my hand when I shouted, "Bubby!" But he didn't even look back. His little legs moved so fast they almost blurred, charging straight toward the figure at the end of the wooden walkway. My stomach dropped. I sprinted after him. He was usually calm and gentle. Why was he suddenly running like a wild thing today? "Bubby! Come back!" I shouted as I ran. But the moment I saw who Bubby had jumped on, every drop of blood in my body froze.

A deep gray suit. Tall frame. Sharp profile defined by the sunset. It was Samson. My mind went blank, and only one thought survived. Run. I didn't even dare take a second look. I spun around and bolted, pushing through the lavender field. The flowers brushed my arms with a prickly itch, but I didn't care. Alice screeched in my head. "Did he see you? Did he recognize you?" "Probably not!" I gasped between breaths, feet pounding the dirt. "He was busy with Bubby. When I'm Sara, I sharpen my eyebrows and darken my skin tone by two shades.

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He won't figure it out that fast!" Even so, my heart was slamming against my ribs. What was Samson doing in Mooncrest Pack? And why did he show up in my lavender field of all places? I sprinted all the way back to the estate. I didn't even kick off my shoes. I stormed into the main house with dirt-covered canvas sneakers. Lydia stepped out of the kitchen carrying a fruit tray. When she saw my pale face, she hurried over. "Ms. Lamb, what happened? You look terrified." "Lydia, from now on, don't call me Ms. Lamb." I grabbed her arm, breathless. "Tell everyone to call me Ms. Airel.

Say I'm the estate owner's younger daughter who just came back from overseas. No matter who asks, no one is allowed to mention my real identity." Lydia looked confused but nodded immediately. "Understood. I'll inform everyone." 1/2 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 175 Run, Before He Sees the Truth 32 +30 Free Coin She knew I had a complicated identity and never questioned my decisions. That was why I trusted her with the estate. I rushed upstairs, locked my bedroom door, and ran straight to the vanity.

The girl in the mirror looked exactly like Amanda-hair messy from running, cheeks flushed, bright and alive. There was no trace of Sara's cool distance. If Samson saw this face even once, he would start connecting the dots. I opened a jewelry box and pulled out a black silver-stitched veil. I draped it over my face, covering everything except my eyes. Alice finally relaxed. "Much safer. Even if he stands right in front of you, he won't link Airel with Amanda or Sara." Samson's POV: Before I could react, the girl in the ivory dress turned and ran, her footsteps scattering down the walkway.

Her reaction was too strange. If she were a stranger, she would at least try to explain the dog. But she fled without hesitation-as if she were afraid of being seen. I instinctively stepped forward to chase her, but Bubby bumped my wrist with his nose, wagging his tail. The soft fur snapped me out of it. Charles reminded me quietly, "Don't forget why

you're here. Mr. Reeves is waiting to discuss the energy-crystal partnership. It would be rude to show up late." I stopped. Bubby sat by my foot, tail sweeping the ground. He didn't act wild at all-definitely someone's pet. Probably hers.

Her side profile, her build, even the tone she used when calling "Bubby"... All identical to Amanda. But why did she run? Mark

Chapter 176 Dalton's Niece Samson's POV: A 32 +30 Free Coins I led the white dog into the estate. The clingy Samoyed kept rubbing against my pant until it caught sight of the old man on the couch. It stopped being so hyper, wagged its tail, and went over to sniff him. The living room looked grand but not flashy. Old porcelain vases sat on dark brown wooden furniture, and the landscape oil paintings of the Mooncrest Pack on the walls gleamed with age. Warm yellow light spilled onto the wool rug, dispelling the chill characteristic of stone buildings.

Dalton sat in the main seat, holding a teacup. His gray beard was neatly trimmed. His cloudy eyes sharpened when he looked at me. "Boy, you're much steadier than your grandpa was at your age." "You flatter me, Mr. Reeves." I pushed the gift box of iceroot I brought toward the center of the coffee table. "My grandpa recently caught a cold and isn't well enough to travel, so he asked me to visit in his place. This is the first harvest of iceroot in Eclipse Pack this year.

It's good for old ailments." "He is so thoughtful." Dalton waved for a housekeeper to take the gift, then got straight to the point. "I'll get straight to the point. Mooncrest Pack wants to use Eclipse Pack's northern transport hub. In return, we'll lower the purchase price by 30%. What do you think?" The offer was better than what our operations team expected. I lowered my head to check the draft agreement I brought. Just then, the antique clock on the wall struck six times, snapping me out of my thoughts. "It's getting late.

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There's no rush to finalize the details of the cooperation." I closed the folder and stood up. "I'll refine the proposal and send it over tomorrow. I won't interrupt your dinner." "What's the rush?" Dalton grabbed my arm. His palm felt rough with calluses. "You came all this way, how can I let you leave on an empty stomach? Stay for a simple meal. I also have a niece I'd like you to meet." Just as he finished speaking, the butler in a gray long coat hurried in and whispered in his ear, as if asking for instructions.

1/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 176 Dalton's Niece 32 +30 Free Coins I tactfully looked away toward the window and vaguely heard words like "Ms." and "veil." After the butler left, Dalton slowly said, "This niece of mine is a distant relative. She's the one in charge of this estate now. It's good for you, young people, to connect; it makes future collaboration between the packs easier." He paused, as if trying to recall something, then added, "Her name is ... Airel." That brief pause made me raise an eyebrow. Why hesitate when saying his own niece's name? Charles snorted in my mind.

"This old man is probably planning something, but we do need to secure a relationship with the estate's owner. Eclipse Pack doesn't have reliable connections in Mooncrest Pack." I thought it over and nodded. "It would be my honor to meet Ms. Airel." Networking aside, that figure running through the lavender fields was enough reason for me to stay. This Airel might be the key to the questions in my head. A housekeeper led us to the dining room. When we just sat down, soft footsteps came from the stairs. A housekeeper gently reminded her, "Slow down, Ms. Airel."

The steps are slippery." I looked up. A slender figure was coming down the stairs. The hem of a dark velvet gown brushed the stone steps. Her long hair was styled in a low bun, secured by a silver hairpin. What stood out was the veil on her face. It was black with fine silver stitching, covering her from the brow bone to the chin, leaving only her clear forehead and a pair of eyes. "Uncle Dalton." Her voice came through the veil, deliberately low and hoarse, like her throat had been scraped raw. "This must be Mr.

Ortega from the Eclipse Pack?" "That's right." Dalton smiled and waved for her to sit. Before I could speak, the housekeeper beside her quickly explained, "Mr. Ortega, sorry for this. Ms. Airel was tending to the flowers in the lavender field just now and suffered a pollen allergy. Her face is swollen, and even her voice is affected. That's why she's wearing a veil. Please excuse us." So that's it. The worry in my chest eased. No wonder she ran off when I saw her in the flower field. The allergy must've flared up. But when she sat down and looked at me, my breath caught.

The relief I'd just felt vanished. 2/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M.. ... Chapter 176 Dalton's Niece Those eyes... They look too much like... 4 Mark

Chapter 177 Do You Love Her? Amanda's POV: 32 +30 Free Coins Samson's eyes felt like a warin searchlight locked on my face. Even with the veil on, I could clearly feel him studying me. Cold sweat subtly beaded in my palms, and the sound of my knife and fork scraping the plate became gratingly loud. Alice was panicking in my head. "Did he figure it out?" I instinctively lowered my head to avoid his gaze and let out a rough cough. That finally pulled Samson's attention away. He looked aside, picked up his water, took a sip, and said calmly, "Ms.

Airel, there's no need to be nervous." My chance had come. I quickly raised a hand to hold my veil, letting my fingers pause near my cheek on purpose. I lowered my voice even more. "I'm sorry, Mr. Ortega, Uncle Dalton. My pollen allergy is quite severe. My face is itchy and swollen, so it's awkward to eat with you. I think I'll return to my room." Before Samson could respond, Dalton chuckled and waved his hand. "Of course. Go get some rest. Don't push yourself." I let out a quiet sigh of relief, gave a small nod, and fled out of the dining room. Alice breathed a sigh of relief.

"That was close! The way he was staring at you, he was practically trying to pierce the veil with his eyes." After the housekeeper brought the meal to my room, I ate quickly. Out of nowhere, Bobby slipped in, wagging his tail and rubbing my leg. "You little troublemaker." I laughed, scratched his head, and got ready to walk him on the estate to

digest a bit. While we were walking, Dalton suddenly appeared in front of me with Samson beside him. "Airel, the Mooncrest Pack is having a fireworks show tonight in the square down the mountain. Why don't you go with Mr. Ortega?"

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It's the least we can do as hosts." 1/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 177 Do You Love Her? : A32 +30 Free Coins "I..." I instinctively wanted to refuse, but then I caught Samson's look from the corner of my eye. He was leaning against the trellis, hands in his suit pockets, his gaze firm, leaving no room to say no. Dalton added, "Mr. Ortega is an important guest. Going with him would also be a good chance to talk about some interesting things between the packs." At that point, I could only nod. "Okay." On the way down the mountain, Bubby ran ahead of us.

Every now and then, he ran back and brushed against Samson's ankle, like he was his dog. The square was already packed. We found a quiet viewing spot and had just stopped when the first firework shot into the sky. Gold and red light rained down, lighting up Samson's profile and softening his usually sharp features. "Ms. Airel," he said suddenly, his voice sounding low under the roar of the fireworks. "I've always felt like you remind me of a friend of mine." My heart pounded. My nails dug into my palm. Alice held her breath. "Don't panic! He has no proof.

He's just testing you!" I forced myself to stay calm and asked in my rough voice, "Oh? What kind of person is this friend of yours?" He watched the fireworks burst across in the night sky. His eyes softened, as if recalling a cherished memory. "People looked down on her," he said. "They said she didn't have a wolf spirit, dressed poorly, came from the countryside, and didn't belong in the Eclipse Pack's circle." He paused and turned to me, the seriousness in his eyes almost piercing the veil. "But to me, she's brave and kind.

Even when her own life was hard, she still wanted to help others and never backed down from danger." He was talking about me. The words were like a hot stone hitting my heart, making my eyes sting with emotion. I replied without thinking, "Of course. She's a wonderful person." The moment I said that, I knew I had slipped up. Samson frowned slightly, and the scrutiny in his gaze sharpened. "Ms. Airel, you sound like ... you know her very well?" The night wind carried the smell of firework smoke. I clenched my hands and quickly changed 2/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 177 Do You Love Her?

32 +30 Free Coins the subject, trying to sound casual. "You speak about her so sincerely. She must be someone worthy of that affection." I looked up at him, fireworks lighting his face, and asked the question that had been on the tip of my tongue. "Do you love her?" 3/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 Mark

Chapter 178 Not Now Amanda's POV: "Do you love her?" (32) +30 Free Coins The moment the question left my mouth, a gigantic firework burst overhead. Silver-blue light

filled the sky, and the explosion swallowed my voice. I didn't even see Samson's reaction. I just felt a cold sweat break out. Why did I ask that? One second, I was carefully hiding who I was, and the next, I let my emotions take over. "What did you say?" Samson leaned closer, cupping his hand around his ear, his brow slightly furrowed. "The fireworks are too loud.

I didn't catch that." His breath carried the coolness of the night wind. Standing so close, I could clearly see the fine, sparkling dust clinging to his eyelashes. My heart started racing again. The instinct to flee instantly overpowered my curiosity. I quickly took a step back, almost stumbling as I turned. My voice shook. "N-nothing! I just think the fireworks are too loud. I'm not feeling great." I didn't wait for his reply; I ran toward the exit. I didn't even stop when Bubby ran after me and rubbed my hand. I was afraid he would ask again, but more afraid of hearing the answer.

Whether it was "yes" or "no," either one could easily shatter my carefully maintained composure. Alice groaned in my mind, frustrated. "Why are you running? He's almost figured it out already. You were just one answer away!" "I don't want to hear it!" I shot back, walking even faster. "I already regret asking. If he says yes, what do I do? If he says no, what do I do?" Losing control over my emotions was more terrifying than not being an Alpha. I'd always hidden inside my shell. Even showing Samson a tiny bit of how I felt was like peeling off a layer of armor. It made me tense.

When I got back to the estate, Dalton and Samson were in the living room having tea. Seeing me out of breath, Dalton quickly stood up. "Why did you run so fast? Mr. Ortega said you suddenly left. We were worried something happened to you." 1/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 178 Not Now 32 +30 Free Coin: I avoided Samson's eyes and stared at the tip of my shoes, subconsciously twisting the hem of my dress. "Sorry, Uncle Dalton. Mr. Ortega. I've been scared of loud noises since I was little. The fireworks were way too loud. My heart was racing.

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I couldn't take it and just came back first." The excuse was half true. I was afraid of loud noises. The explosion from the Glacier Pack still showed up in my nightmares. "Why didn't you say so earlier?" Samson's voice came from across the room, carrying a subtle concern. "I could've taken you back." "There's no need, Mr. Ortega!" I blurted out. I realized right away I'd reacted too strongly, so I added, "It was easy for me to come back on my own. I didn't want to interrupt you and Uncle Dalton." Then, I nodded.

"I'll go upstairs to rest." I practically ran up the stairs, the warmth of Samson's gaze following me like a spotlight, making my back tingle. The instant I locked the door, I leaned against it, exhausted, not even noticing that my veil had slipped off. Bubby nudged my feet and rubbed his head against my hand, as if comforting me. I crouched down and hugged him, burying my cheek in his soft fur, which finally made me feel a little more at ease. Alice sighed. "Your avoidant personality is seriously hopeless. If you like him, you like him.

Why keep hiding it?" "I'm not hiding it," I said weakly as I sank onto the carpet. "I'm just scared. Think about it: the person who hurt me is still out there. I can't even guarantee my own safety. How dare I get involved in a relationship? What if I drag Samson into it?" More importantly, I was used to using 'Ugly Face,' 'Sara,' and 'Airel' as protective shells. To face his feelings as "Amanda"? I had no idea how to do that. "But when you asked him, your eyes lit up," Alice called me out. "You can fool others, but not me. You care about how he sees you and whether he loves you.

This has nothing to do with being destined mates. This is you falling for him." I didn't argue. When I closed my eyes, all I could see was the look in Samson's eyes when he said, "She's brave and kind," and the way he leaned in with his hand to his ear when he didn't hear me. Those 2/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M... Chapter 178 Not Now images simmered around my heart, a warmth that felt almost painful. A 32 +30 Free Coins I had to admit that Alice was right. I'm into him.

Not because of some werewolf destiny, but because he was Samson-the one who could see past my "country bumpkin" look and see who I really was. "But not now." I wiped the dampness that had escaped my eyes. "Before I find the real culprit who hurt me and my parents back then, I can't afford to have a weakness." I stood up, walked to the window, and pulled back the curtain. The streetlights glowed with a warm yellow light. In the distance, Samson's car was slowly driving out the gate. Alice didn't argue anymore, just quietly said, "Don't make yourself wait too long.

Some feelings can't afford the wait." I stayed silent and clenched my fist. In the mirror, my features looked sharp. No veil-just me. I admitted it: I was into Samson. But I needed to find my own truth first before I could stand in front of him with my head held high. I didn't want to run anymore; I just needed a little more time. 3/3 Mark

Chapter 179 Love Trouble Amanda's POV: 4 (3 +30 Free Col Morning light filtered through the gap in the curtains and hit my pillow just as I finally drifted off. My eyes still felt sore. I got up and looked in the mirror, yep, dark circles. No surprise. I'd spent all night tossing and turning, stuck on the image of Samson leaning in and asking, "What did you say?" Even Alice had gotten tired of me and gone quiet. When I went downstairs, Lydia was coming out of the kitchen with breakfast. The moment she saw my face, she set the plate down and leaned in, winking mischievously. "Ms. Lamb-oh no, Ms.

Airel," she said, dragging out the name on purpose. "Those dark circles say you didn't get much sleep. Is there some story between you and Mr. Ortega? Why else would you be so tense and pretending?" I almost spit out my milk. I quickly put the glass down and reached out to tickle her. "What nonsense are you talking about? I just didn't sleep well because I'm not used to the bed." The instinct to avoid the topic kicked in again. I grabbed a slice of toast and mumbled, "By the way. The Mooncrest Cup starts today. I'm meeting a friend to watch, so I need to get ready." I ran toward the stairs.

Behind me, Lydia called out with a laugh, "Slow down! Don't forget to take your breakfast!" Alice yawned. "You're getting good at changing the subject." I didn't reply. I quickly changed into a denim jacket that was easy to move in and stuffed the veil into my bag. I'd be at an outdoor arena all day, so I couldn't use the pollen-allergy excuse. I decided to go without the disguise. The place would be crowded, and Samson might not even come. After putting on concealer to cover the dark circles, I grabbed the lunch box Lydia prepared and walked out of the estate.

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The Mooncrest Pack racetrack was larger than I'd imagined. Team flags fluttered at the entrance. Werewolves wore T-shirts with team logos, held up light boards, and shouted at the top of their lungs. The air smelled like sweet popcorn mixed with the sharp scent of burned rubber. I had just reached the entrance to the stands when a familiar voice called out, "Boss! Over 1/2 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M.. Chapter 179 Love Trouble here!" 32 +30 Free Coins Theo was sitting in the front row of the VIP section, with an empty seat next to him. He waved at me, but he didn't look as energetic as usual.

His dark circles were almost as bad as mine. I walked over and sat down. As soon as I handed him the lunch box, he frowned at my face. "What's wrong? Didn't sleep well last night?" "Not used to the new bed," I said, avoiding his eyes and looking toward the center of the track. Staff were doing final checks on the cars. The silver-gray bodies reflected cold light in the sun. "What about you? You look exhausted." Theo gave a bitter smile and scratched his head. "What else? Same as you-love trouble." He paused, then softened his voice when he saw how tense my face was. "You look stressed too.

Is it about the Alpha heir from the Eclipse Pack?" My grip tightened around the water bottle. "I get it," Theo said, staring at the track. "Guess we're both in the same mess now." Right then, a deafening cheer erupted in the stadium. I looked up. Twelve race cars were lined up behind the starting line, engines rumbling low, like beasts waiting to strike. The red signal lights turned on one by one. The crowd slowly went quiet, even the air seemed to freeze. Vrooom! 2/2 Mark

Chapter 180 The Mooncrest Cup Amanda's POV: 32 +30 Free Coins The black race car blasted through a series of sharp turns, tilting so sharply it was almost at a 45-degree angle. The crowd went wild, cheering louder. I gripped the railing, my palms sweaty. The flashing lights in front of me suddenly overlapped with old memories. I used to race like that-flying down the track without a care. Alice sighed. "If that accident hadn't happened back then, you might be out on that track right now." I was zoning out when I spotted a tall figure in a dark gray suit on the VIP stand ahead.

He stood out even in the crowd. It was Samson. Cody, his assistant, was next to him, reporting something quietly. Samson's profile looked cold and sharp, but when the crowd cheered, he slightly turned his head. Alarm bells rang in my head. I reflexively reached for my bag, frantically pulled out the veil with trembling fingers, and quickly put

it on. After tying a hasty knot at the back of my head, I urgently tugged on Theo's sleeve and whispered, "Don't call my name. If anyone asks, call me Ms. Airel." "Huh? Why?" Theo was busy watching an intense overtake on the track.

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I startled him, and he subconsciously raised his voice. "Amanda, what are you doing?!" "Shut up!" I covered his mouth, my heart nearly jumping out of my chest. Too late. Theo's loud voice grabbed everyone's attention around us. Even Samson, who was talking to someone not far away, turned to look. The moment our eyes met, time seemed to freeze. Samson stopped in his tracks. The calm look in his eyes cracked. His gaze landed first on the veil covering my face, then on my hand gripping Theo's sleeve. His brows furrowed imperceptibly.

1/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 180 The Mooncrest Cup : 32 +30 Free Coins The crowd was still cheering. The engines were roaring. But to me, everything went quiet. All I could hear was my own fast breathing. "Why did you yell so loud?" I pinched Theo and hissed through gritted teeth. "Samson's right there!" Only then did Theo follow my line of sight. He froze when he saw Samson. "The big boss from Eclipse Pack? Why is he here?" He was about to speak again, but I stopped him with a look. Yet, the idiot still asked, looking completely lost, "So, what do we do? Run?" Run?

Wouldn't that look even more suspicious? I took a deep breath and forced myself to calm down. I adjusted the edge of my veil and tried to sound normal. "Don't move. Just watch the race." But I couldn't stop myself from glancing his way. Samson had finished talking and was walking toward us. Alice panicked. "He's coming! What do we do? Should we pretend to go to the restroom and hide?" "We can hide for a moment, but not forever." I clenched my fist, my nails digging into my palm. The pain helped me calm down a little. Samson's footsteps came closer.

That familiar cedar scent reached me, mixed with the heat of the racetrack. Theo finally sensed something was wrong. He shut up and nervously rubbed his hands. "Ms. Airel?" Samson's voice came from behind me, curious, probing. "What a coincidence. I didn't expect to run into you here." I turned, stiff but trying to look natural. "Are you also interested in racing, Mr. Ortega?" My cheeks burned beneath the veil. I didn't dare look into his eyes and could only stare at the buttons on his suit. "The Mooncrest Cup is a big event in Howlstead.

It's normal to come and watch." "Indeed." His gaze stayed on my face, as if trying to see through the veil. "But what's even more interesting is that I think I just heard someone call you 'Amanda'?" 2/3 18:16 Wed, Dec 31 M Chapter 180 The Mooncrest Cup My heart dropped. : A32 32 +30 Free Coins 3/3 Mark

Chapter 181 Fog Over the Racetrack Amanda's POV: So yeah. He heard it after all. Theo panicked and was about to explain, but I cut in first and laughed it off. +20 Free Coins "Mr. Ortega, you must've misheard. It's too loud here. Maybe someone was

calling a friend. My name's Airel. Why would anyone call me Amanda?" I tilted my chin toward the track on purpose. "Look, it's the last turn!" Samson said nothing. He just looked at me. I could feel his eyes staying on mine for way too long. That look felt sharp, like he was trying to pull my mask right off. Then the track exploded with cheers.

The driver Theo had been rooting for-Joel Campbell-crossed the finish line in a black car and won the championship. The audience instantly went wild. Theo forgot his nerves, jumped up cheering, and grabbed my arm. "Airel! Look! We won!" I stood up with his pull and let the cheers cover my breath of relief. But when I turned, I met Samson's meaningful gaze. Samson's POV: The cheers were deafening. Confetti fell onto my shoulders. But I couldn't focus on the excitement of the victory-the scene in front of me was too strange.

Theo and Airel-one was a Beta from the Glacier Pack, the other an heiress from Mooncrest Pack. They shouldn't have anything to do with each other. But the way they were cheering and grabbing each other's arms clearly showed they were close. That wasn't the kind of relationship you get from a "quick hello." I looked away and absentmindedly rubbed my cufflink. The world might be small, but for these two people to be together, and to meet right where I'd run into Airel-the coincidence felt far too deliberate. "What a coincidence, Ms. Airel," I said, breaking the silence.

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I kept my tone casual, but my eyes moved between her and Theo. "Didn't expect to see you here." Then I turned to Theo and gave a small nod. "You're also here to watch the race, Mr. Meskill?" Theo still looked excited, but he froze for a second. He subconsciously glanced at Airel, then answered vaguely, "I just happened to be here on a business trip. When I heard about the event, I thought I'd stop by and take a look." Business trip? I almost laughed. 1/3 18:35 Thu, Jan 1 M & Chapter 181 Fog Over the Racetrack Theo's racing team had registered for the Mooncrest Cup a long time ago.

As a key member, he "happened" to be here? +20 Free Coins I looked at Airel again. When I asked about "Amanda," she'd clearly panicked. Now she was acting like nothing happened. This stark contrast was abnormal. A different scene suddenly came to mind-Theo stood with Amanda on a tree-lined path, smiling as he handed her a bottle of water. They talked as if they were already close. The image in front of me overlapped with that memory. Even the look in Theo's eyes when he glanced at Airel was the same familiar, indulgent look he gave Amanda. "Ms.

Airel, you two know each other?" I looked straight into her eyes, slowing my words on purpose. Airel looked calm. She nodded slightly, her tone natural. "You could say that. Mr. Meskill and I happened to be sitting next to each other. I also found out he works with my uncle, so we said hello and chatted a bit." Flawless explanation. It covered why they were sitting together and how they "met." Nothing sounded wrong. On a normal day, I might've believed her. But now-images of someone running through a lavender field, the familiar look in her eyes at the dinner.

table, Theo's blatant concealment, and all these "coincidences" were like a net, tightly weaving "Airel" and "Amanda" together. I didn't expose her; I just let a meaningful smile play on my lips. "I thought a young lady from a prestigious family would prefer concerts or tea parties. I didn't expect you to be into something as wild as racing. You're full of surprises, Ms. Airel." I stressed the word "surprises" and watched her reaction. No flicker of emotion. She just replied calmly, "It's just an interest. I wouldn't say I like it that much." She paused, then turned the question back on me.

"Mr. Ortega, did you come to Mooncrest Pack just for this race?" "That's right," I said, nodding. My gaze never left hers. "The Mooncrest Cup is a top event in Howlstead. You get to watch exciting racing and networking. Two birds with one stone." Then I deliberately added, "Speaking of which, I have a friend who also loves racing. Too bad she's not here. Otherwise, I'd introduce you." I saw Airel's grip on the railing tighten for a split second. I didn't miss it. Charles murmured, "Something's wrong. This girl is definitely hiding something."

She has to be connected to Amanda." I didn't press her anymore. I just turned back to the track. The award ceremony had started. The cheers were still loud. 2/3 18:35 Thu, Jan Chapter 181 Fog Over the Racetrack +20 Free Coins But the doubts in my head kept growing. Was Airel actually Amanda? Why was she hiding who she was? And what role was Theo playing in all this? Everything felt like fog over the racetrack, waiting for me to clear it away... P 2/3 18:35 Thu, Jan 1 0 Mark

Chapter 182 See You, Ms Lamb Chapter 182 See You, Ms Lamb Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins I didn't dare look at Samson's eyes again. I used the noise of the award ceremony as an excuse and said, "Mr. Ortega, the award ceremony is starting. I want to see the trophy up close, so I won't keep you." I couldn't hide my eagerness. I just wanted this big problem gone. Samson stared at me for a moment. He said nothing and just nodded. "Go ahead, Ms. Airel." When he turned away, he glanced at Theo. The scrutiny in that look sent another chill down my spine.

Only after Samson disappeared into the crowd did I finally relax and sit down. Theo leaned over, confused. "What's your deal with him? Why are you so scared of him? You pretended to look ugly in the Eclipse Pack, and now you're wearing a veil in the Mooncrest Pack? Your disguise skills are maxed out." "Long story. I can't explain it right now." I rubbed my throbbing temples and looked at Joel on the stage. He was holding up the trophy and cheering, his smile full of youthful pride. But Samson's words made me uneasy. "Just remember this: don't call me by my real name around him."

Please do me this favor." Theo still looked confused, but seeing how serious I was, he patted his chest. "Fine, I get it. Secret, right? If you're in trouble, just call me." He winked at me. "Like blocking unwanted admirers. I'm good at that." His joke made me smile, easing the tight knot in my heart. After sitting for a while, I felt a heavy, uncomfortable feeling in my lower stomach. I stood up and said, "I'm going to the restroom. Wait here and don't wander off." Theo made an "OK" sign, already distracted again by the interviews below the stage. The hallway was crowded.

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I followed the signs toward the restroom. As soon as I turned a corner, I heard a familiar voice-Samson. My heart jumped. I instinctively hid behind a nearby pillar, holding my breath. "You did well today. That last corner was a bit too aggressive. You need to be steadier," Samson said with quiet approval. He sounded more relaxed, no longer probing like before. "Thank you for your advice, Mr. Ortega!" That was Joel's voice, excited but humble. "Your drifting tips really helped. I felt way better today than I did in training. I'll do my best in the final tomorrow.

I won't let you down!" Samson patted his shoulder, his voice full of trust. "Don't stress yourself out. Get some good rest and maintain your condition." Footsteps faded. Joel must have left. I leaned against the cold pillar, my mind buzzing. Joel was Samson's 1/2 Chapter 182 See You, Ms Lamb 44 +20 Free Coins. man! No wonder Samson seemed calm when Joel won, but there was a knowing look hidden in his eyes. Alice suddenly got it. "So he's been training race drivers in secret.

That's his style-doing everything quietly, but always having it all planned out." I thought back to my time at the Eclipse Pack, when I'd once noticed racing models in Samson's study. I remembered the gentle tone he used when he talked about a "friend who liked racing." Turns out, racing wasn't just a hobby to him; he was serious about it. That realization left me with mixed feelings-surprised, but also not surprised. I didn't want to stay, so I slipped toward another exit while the hallway was quiet. After just a few steps, I bumped into a solid chest.

When I looked up, our eyes locked - Samson was still there! There was no hiding now. I stood straight, bracing myself, and forced a stiff smile. "Small world. We meet again, Mr. Ortega." Samson looked at me and greeted me politely. "Ms. Airel, are you heading back?" I nodded calmly. "The race is over. There's nothing else to see. I'll come back tomorrow for the final." He nodded in agreement. "See you, Ms. Lamb." "Bye." I waved, trying not to look nervous. I didn't look back and kept walking. Suddenly-Bang! A gunshot rang out in the hall, instantly breaking the noise.

How could there be a gunshot? 2/2 Mark

Chapter 183 Gunshots and Panic Chapter 183 Gunshots and Panic Amanda's POV: "How could there be a gunshot?" +20 Free Coins The moment the question left my mouth, a single thought exploded in my mind-Samson was still inside! He hadn't gone far. Maybe he was still near the hallway! Panic made me turn and push against the crowd back toward the building. "Excuse me! Please move!" I yelled, shoving through people. My shoulders were bruised from being bumped, and I didn't bother to fix the hair falling across my face.

In the chaos, someone stepped on my shoe and it slipped off, and someone else bumped me, making me stumble. But my eyes were fixed only on the direction of the deeper part of the venue-Samson couldn't get hurt. Absolutely not! I rounded a corner,

and suddenly my foot tripped over something. I fell forward. Bang! My knees and hands slammed into the hard concrete. Pain instantly spread through me. Before I could even get up, a panicked foot stomped on the back of my hand. "Ahhh!" The pain made me scream. "Don't push! Everyone, this way!" a security guard shouted from behind.

I gritted my teeth and pushed myself up. Just as I stood straight, I was knocked off balance by a rushing spectator. My face was about to hit the cold wall when a large, calloused hand suddenly grabbed my wrist, and the other quickly wrapped around my waist, pinning me tightly against the wall. The familiar scent of cedar instantly enveloped me. I looked up and met Samson's deep eyes. Sweat clung to his temple, his suit ruffled, clearly showing he'd fought his way through the chaos, too. His hands were on the wall beside my head, forming a protective shield.

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His voice came out breathless, urgent. "Ms. Airel, are you okay?" Being this close, I could see the sweat on his lashes and feel his chest rising and falling. My heart felt like it was going to jump out, not from fear, but from that split-second instinct-I had rushed back here, recklessly, for him. Alice sighed. "You don't have to lie to yourself now, do you? This is love." Yeah. I fell for him. I loved him so much that in the face of death, the first thought wasn't my own safety, but his whereabouts. The realization made me panic. I shoved him away abruptly, voice trembling.

"I'm fine!" 1/2 Chapter 183 Gunshots and Panic Bang! Another gunshot, closer than before, like it was right at the end of the hallway. +20 Free Cours The screams intensified; someone was sobbing and scrambling for the exit. Samson's face went serious. He instinctively grabbed my arm, shielding me with his body. "Don't just stand there. Come with me!" His hand was warm and strong, carrying an undeniable force. He pulled me along as I stumbled through the crowd. My scraped knee hurt as we ran, but I didn't let go. I kept up with him. I had no idea how long we ran.

We only stopped when we reached a lawn far from the hall. I leaned on my knees, gasping for air, cold sweat soaking my back. My hands and knees stung from the scrapes. Samson glanced back at the chaotic entrance, then looked down at my bleeding hand, frowning. "It should be safe here. Your hand..." I quickly hid my hands behind my back and looked away. "Just a scratch. It's fine. My heart was still racing. The memory of him protecting me, the warmth of his palm-it all replayed in my mind over and over, making it impossible for me to meet his eyes, 18:35 Thu, Jan 1 M Mark

Chapter 184 Caught in the Chaos Chapter 184 Caught in the Chaos Samson's POV: +20 Free Coins The moment the gunshots rang out, my first reaction was to protect my assistant and follow the crowd toward the exit. Mooncrest Pack's venue was heavily guarded; a gunshot here was definitely not a normal disturbance. But this wasn't Eclipse Pack territory. If I intervened recklessly, I'd be crossing lines. Better to ensure safety first and plan next steps later. "Samson!" A familiar voice cut through the chaotic screams, shaky and urgent. I froze. My heart skipped a beat.

This voice sounded exactly like Amanda's! It had that clear, stubborn tone to her. I pushed through the crowd toward the sound, an inexplicable hope rising in me. But as I turned the corner, what I saw was her, running against the flow of people. Her hair was messy, she'd lost a shoe, and her knees were stained with dirt and blood. She was stumbling forward. Hope sank instantly, replaced by confusion. Why was she here? Why did she call my name? She'd called it so urgently, like... Like Amanda's tone. I didn't have time to think.

I saw her about to hit the wall and instinctively rushed forward to shield her. Up close, I looked into her eyes and felt certain—the panic and worry in those eyes were identical to Amanda's. The way she had just pushed me away was also a habit of Amanda's when she was nervous, a gentle push but clearly meant to evade. "It's nothing serious. Don't panic. Come with me," I said, deliberately using the soft tone I reserved only for Amanda. She froze, as expected. A flicker of panic crossed her eyes, and then she lowered her head and followed. As we ran, she instinctively grabbed my sleeve.

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The way her fingers curled reminded me exactly of Amanda when she was scared. 1/3 18:35 Thu, Jan 1 Md. Chapter 184 Caught in the Chaos +20 Free Coins I watched quietly, my doubts growing. If she were Airel, Dalton's niece, how did she know my full name? Why were her eyes, movements, and even her reactions in a moment of crisis completely identical to Amanda's? When we stopped, I noticed her hand was bleeding. Just as I was about to ask my assistant to get medicine, she quickly hid her hand and looked away, just like Amanda did when I saw through her. I glanced at her bloodied knee.

I softened my voice. "The estate isn't far from here. I'll take you back. Your wounds need to be treated." She looked up, her eyes still filled with panic, nodded, and stayed silent. The venue was still in chaos, police sirens getting louder. I looked at her quiet figure beside me. The gunshot didn't just shatter the peace of the Mooncrest Cup; it was also about to tear through the layers of her disguise. And all I had to do was wait for the moment she revealed herself... The sirens grew closer, red and blue lights flashing across the venue walls, stretching the shadows on the lawn.

I signaled my assistant to contact the Mooncrest Pack leaders and get details on the shooting. When I turned back, she suddenly moved. Her movements were clumsy, likely because of the painful wound on her knee. She hissed as she bent over and pulled her phone out of the inner pocket of her denim jacket. "What's wrong?" I asked instinctively. She didn't look back, just waved her hand, her fingers quickly swiping across the screen. She was clearly flustered. As soon as she hit the call button, her shoulders eased a little. But when the waiting beep started, that relief vanished.

She held the phone to her ear. "Come on, pick up," she murmured, her voice soft but desperate. Then the beep stopped, replaced by a robotic female voice, "The number you dialed is not available. Please try again later..." She seemed to lose all her strength.

Her hand holding the phone dropped, and it hit her thigh, but she didn't even seem to notice. Her bright eyes dimmed. Her lips pressed tight, and her shoulders slumped. She looked utterly lost. "No answer?" I asked gently, looking at her pale face.

It took her a moment to react, then she quickly shoved the phone into her pocket, avoiding my gaze. Her voice turned hoarse again. "N-nothing, just ... calling my family to let them know I'm safe." But the tension and hope she'd shown while making the call were not the kind of emotion you'd have for 2/3 18.35 Inu, Jan M Chapter 184 Caught in the Chaos just "family." Could it be... the person on the other end was her crush?

+20 Free Coins The idea popped into my head, and I instantly remembered how close she had been with Theo at the VIP stands, and how he joked about "blocking unwanted admirers." Was the person she was so desperate to contact Theo? Mark

Chapter 185 Saved Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins I ran across the lawn behind Samson, my chest burning. The gash on my knee kept jolting with pain every time I moved. Police sirens wailed in the distance. Red and blue lights spun through the sky, sharp and dizzying. But I had only one thought in my head-Theo was still inside the building. "Damn it!" I yanked out my phone. My fingers were shaking so badly that I had to tap the screen over and over just to pull up his contact. The line rang in my ear. Every ring dragged longer than the one before. My stomach kept sinking with each one.

Back in the chaos, he was still sitting in the audience watching the interview. What if he got separated? Or worse, what if he got hit when the shooting started? Alice snapped, "Get a grip! That kid's tough. He's not going down that easy. Try again!" I was about to hang up and redial when a voice cut through the noise like a whip. "Ms. Aire! Over here!" My head shot up. Theo burst out from the front doors, running full speed. His hair stuck up like a mop. His suit jacket hung off one shoulder, and dust smeared across his cheek.

But the second he spotted me, he lit up with that same reckless grin. The pressure in my chest finally shattered. I marched straight to him and smacked his arm. "Where the hell did you disappear to? I called a dozen times!" "Don't even go there. The second the shots fired, the whole place went nuts. I got shoved backstage. I must've dropped my phone in the chaos. I just found it." He scratched his head. Then his eyes locked on my knee, and his expression twisted. "What the hell happened? Did you get hurt trying to run back for-" "Shut up." I cut him off right away. My eyes flicked to Samson.

He was standing nearby, watching. I dropped my voice. "Not here." Theo finally spotted him. He clamped his mouth shut but didn't stop frowning at my knee. The worry in his face made something twist inside me. Everyone liked to think Theo was just a spoiled brat with a love for fast cars. But they didn't know him like I did. Not when everything went to hell. When Glacier Pack tore itself apart and someone framed my grandfather, Theo was the one who hid me in the garage and risked everything to sneak me food. When I was hunted, he jumped behind the wheel and led them away.

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His wolf spirit was weak enough to be laughed at, but he never flinched. We weren't just a boss and a sidekick. We'd been through blood and fire together. 1/3 18:35 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 185 Saved He was one of the only people I could truly trust in this backstabbing werewolf world. +20 Free Coins "Listen," Theo leaned in close, his voice nearly a whisper, "that gunshot wasn't random. I heard one of the guards talking backstage. Said it came from the VIP box on the second floor. That bullet was deliberately aimed." My whole body went cold. Someone took that shot on purpose?

Mooncrest Pack's security was supposed to be airtight. Getting a gun inside, finding a sniper angle, lining up a shot-that didn't just happen. That was planned. The thought hit me hard, and the fear I thought I'd buried came roaring back. The last time I got kidnapped, it played out the same way. Every move was mapped out. Every step laid in place. Was this tied to that? Who were they going after? Samson? Or was it me? "This place isn't safe. We've got to go. Now," Theo said. He grabbed my wrist and pulled. His hand was warm. Steady. That old, familiar strength jolted me back to the present.

I looked toward Samson. He stood by the car, eyes locked on the place where Theo's hand gripped mine. His face gave nothing away. I thought about how he threw himself over me earlier. About the way he called my name like it meant something. My chest tightened, but this wasn't the time for that. I raised my hand and called out, loud and clear, "Mr. Ortega, thank you for what you did back there. We're heading out now. Goodbye!" I didn't wait for his reply. I turned and followed Theo in quick strides.

I could still feel Samson staring at my back like his gaze carried heat, but I didn't dare turn around. I had bigger things to deal with now. I had to figure out where that shot came from and whether it had anything to do with the people who destroyed my family. Theo ran beside me, tugging my wrist. "You think that bullet was meant for Samson?" I shook my head. "I don't know. He's the heir to Eclipse Pack. He's got plenty of enemies. But it could've been a shot at Mooncrest Pack. Or maybe ... it was for me." I'd been hiding under a fake name inside Mooncrest Pack.

There was always a chance the ones from back then had caught my scent. We got into Theo's car. As the building disappeared through the window, the doubt in my chest only grew 2/3 18:35 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 185 Saved +20 Free Coins heavier. That gunshot wasn't some freak accident. It felt like someone had thrown a stone into a still lake. It broke through the calm of the Mooncrest Cup and made one thing clear. The shadows I thought I left behind had found me again. "I don't care who it is.

If someone's ballsy enough to do this on Mooncrest turf, I'm not letting him get away with it," Theo said. He turned the key in the ignition, and that sharp light flared in his eyes. "I already had the crew start checking the VIP guest list. We'll know soon." I gave a nod and turned back to the window. Mooncrest Pack looked too quiet under the moonlight. It felt like the air was holding its breath. But I knew better. A storm was

building under that silence. And I needed to be ready when it broke. 18:36 Thu, Jan 1  
Mes. Mark

Chapter 186 Discussion With Dalton Amanda's POV: It was past midnight by the time we got back to Reeves Manor. +20 Free Coins Every light in the house was on. Dalton waited right by the front doors. The second I stepped out, he came forward fast, his face tight with worry. "What happened? Was that gunshot connected to you?" I walked straight into the living room and pulled the door shut behind me. My voice dropped to a near whisper. "Dalton, this wasn't random. It was planned. Theo heard it from security. The shot came from the VIP box on the second floor.

Someone aimed it." Dalton's expression went cold. He waved the staff off and led me into the study. "I already had the house security link up with Mooncrest's team. They recovered a bullet at the scene. Just arrived." He reached into the drawer and pulled out a clear evidence bag. Inside was a short, thick bullet that shimmered cold under the light. "Take a look." I took the bag. My fingers brushed over the plastic. The bullet inside was chunkier than standard rounds, and carved into the base was a tiny, sharp-edged ice crystal. I knew that mark. Glacier Pack's custom rounds.

Only core members ever got access to them. My chest tightened. One name hit me straight away. Alice's voice cut through my thoughts, filled with rage. "It's that piece of trash Mephisto! No one else would have the balls to pull something like this right now!" "It's Mephisto," I said, setting the bag on the desk. My tone didn't waver. "My dear cousin's never stopped drooling over the Alpha position." Dalton froze mid-sip, his hand stiff around the cup. "He's the one who stirred up the council of elders. Said you couldn't lead because you're a woman, right?" "That's him." I sank into the chair.

My fingers rubbed the armrest without thinking. The past slammed into me all at once. After my parents died, Glacier Pack fell apart. Mephisto saw his opportunity. He was the only man left in the family, and he played the elders like fools. Said a woman couldn't lead. Convinced them to back him as the new heir. But he forgot one thing. My grandfather didn't just teach me how to fight with a wolf spirit. When it came to tactics, Mephisto's little schemes at the council of elders were a joke. I picked them apart with barely a sentence.

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When it came to allies, I'd been by my grandfather's side for years. Every division leader already saw me as the Alpha heiress. Back then, even with Alice's unstable state, she still managed to help me shut down his rage when it 1/3 18:36 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 186 Discussion With Dalton +20 Free Coins mattered most. At the final vote, he lost every single ballot. His face turned the color of swamp water.

"That moron probably heard I 'vanished,' bought into the gossip that I was some cripple with no wolf spirit, and when he saw me laying low inside Mooncrest Pack, he must've thought I was finished." I let out a sharp laugh. A cold glint flickered through my eyes.

"He's probably betting on the chaos from the Mooncrest Cup. Either he planned to get rid of me quietly, or pin everything on Samson and trigger a full-blown clash between Eclipse Pack and Mooncrest Pack. That way, he could scoop up the leftovers." Dalton nodded. "That sounds exactly like something Mephisto would pull. He's petty.

He's reckless. But I didn't think he'd be dumb enough to fire a shot on Mooncrest Pack's land." "He's not bold, just a fool." I pressed my fingers against my brow. Right then, a warm force stirred in my elixir field. Alice. think She stretched inside my mind, her wolf spirit form humming with strength. "Amanda, don't you we're syncing up more lately? When I tapped into my power just now, your senses went sharper too." I paused and focused. Sure enough, I picked up the sound of footsteps just outside the study. Even the soft chirping in the garden came through crisp.

We'd been through back-to-back hell these past weeks. Alice's spirit had finally steadied. Our link was getting stronger. My body had become sharper too. Faster. More powerful. "Dalton," I stood up, my voice steady, "I'm heading back to Glacier Pack." Dalton looked stunned. "Now? If Mephisto's already made a move, he probably rigged the whole place. You'd be walking into a trap." "That's why I have to go," I said. I walked over to the window and stared at the moonlight outside. "Glacier Pack belonged to my grandfather. I'm not letting someone like Mephisto tear it apart.

If he's ready to fire a bullet, he's hiding more than that. He might even be tied to the people who kidnapped me back then. I need to know." Alice's voice flared with energy. "Damn right we do. Let's go smash his face in. Show him we're not the ones he should've messed with!" I sucked in a breath and curled my fists tight. "I won't do anything reckless," I said as I turned back to Dalton. "Theo's already digging into the VIP box records. Once we have solid proof that Mephisto was behind this, I'll make my move.

And when I do, I won't just drag him into the light-I'll settle everything he left in the dark." Dalton held my gaze, then nodded. "Alright. You've got my support. Whatever you need from the manor, it's yours." The moonlight poured through the window and touched my skin like frost. In my head, I saw Glacier 2/3 18:36 Thu, Jan Chapter 186 Discussion With Dalton +20 Free Coins Pack's snowy ridges and endless forests. Mephisto, everything you owe me, everything you took from Grandpa, from our home-I'm coming for all of it. 3/3 Mark

Chapter 187 Samson's Move Samson's POV: 044 +20 Free Coins Cody came up fast and handed me a bottle of water. "Mr. Ortega, Mooncrest Pack's security confirmed it. The bullet found at the scene had Glacier Pack's mark on it." I cracked the seal and twisted the cap. The cold against my skin cut through the noise in my head. "Glacier Pack? Why the hell would they be mixed up in this?" The Mooncrest Cup was Mooncrest Pack's event. Eclipse Pack was just a guest. Glacier Pack wasn't a host or a sponsor and had no business sending anyone here-let alone someone carrying a custom round.

"My second's already tracking Glacier Pack's movements," Cody added. "Also, Mooncrest's surveillance caught the shooter escaping from the VIP box. The registration was fake, but we found a broken piece of a Glacier Pack ID tag at the scene." An ID tag? "Isn't Glacier Pack dealing with an inheritance fight?" I asked. I remembered something from years ago. My grandfather mentioned it once. Glacier Pack's old Alpha died, and there was a tug-of-war over the seat. In the end, a young woman took it. But she stayed quiet. All people ever said was that she was strong.

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No one even had a proper photo of her. Cody nodded. "Yeah. I heard it was between the old guy's granddaughter and nephew. She won, but the nephew never accepted it. The thing is, she almost never shows up in public. Her second runs most of the business. Some say she's sick. Others think her wolf spirit's unstable." Unstable wolf spirit? "Keep going," I said as I tossed the bottle into the trash. My tone was sharp. "Find out who that Glacier Pack Alpha actually is." Cody gave a quick nod and left. I climbed back into the car. The sirens had faded.

The lights outside the hall had returned to normal. But the weight in my chest only grew heavier. Amanda's POV: After locking down the plan with Dalton, I packed that same night. By early morning, I was already in the manor's car, heading straight for Eclipse Pack. As we pulled into the training camp gates, sunlight stretched across the track. I heard whistles cutting through the air and the deep roars of wolf spirit drills. That familiar noise finally let me breathe a little easier. I had barely stepped into the hallway when something soft slammed into me. "Amanda! You're back!

I missed you so much!" 1/2 18:36 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 187 Samson's Move +20 Free Coins Emily wrapped her arms around mine and rubbed her face against my sleeve. Her eyes sparkled. "You've been gone forever. Don't tell me you snuck off for some secret date?" "You always jump to the craziest conclusions." I laughed, gently pushing her away. "There was a family issue. It took longer than I thought." Emily didn't care. She latched onto me again and dragged me toward the store just outside the field. "Whatever. You still owe me ice cream for vanishing like that! And hey, did you hear?

Alan just released a new track!" She pulled out her phone and tapped into her playlist. A fast, upbeat tune started playing through the speakers. "Listen to this voice. It's unreal." Alan... My hand froze around the cone. Still, I kept my voice easy. "Yeah, I heard it. Sounds nice." Emily didn't notice a thing. She kept talking, eyes shining. "Word is, he's coming here today! He's picking out a few strong wolf spirit users for his personal squad!" I didn't respond. I finished the ice cream fast, said goodbye, and made my way to the training ground. Alice's power had been growing stronger.

I needed to get used to that shift, fast. But just as I stepped out of the store, a familiar voice hit me from behind. "Amanda." 18:36 Thu, Jan 1 ha ch Mark

Chapter 188 Seven's Concern Chapter 188 Seven's Concern Amanda's POV: \$20 Free Coins I barely took a few steps before that voice came again. Steady. Direct. "You wrote Alan's new song, didn't you?" My heart dropped. I stopped right there and turned. Seven stood under a nearby streetlight. His denim jacket looked worn, almost gray. He didn't move. His eyes stayed locked on mine. His voice didn't waver. It wasn't a guess. It was a fact. I didn't say anything. I lowered my gaze. The silence said everything. That song's tone was too obvious. The rhythm of the verses. The hook in the chorus.

All of it screamed my style. That sound had been a part of me for years. Anyone who knew me even a little could hear it and know the truth. Seven stepped closer. The edge in his voice cracked. His calm finally slipped. "You swore off music. Said you'd never touch it again. Why now?" I didn't expect him to find me this fast. But I had already played out this conversation in my head. There was no point dancing around it. I met his eyes head-on. "I didn't write the original. I just cleaned up a few rough spots. That doesn't count." He frowned hard.

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"Avi, that track has your fingerprints all over it. What if people connect the dots? What if they drag up what happened before?" I curled my fingers without thinking. A smile tugged at the corner of my mouth, but it didn't touch my eyes. It was cold. Hollow. "I'm done with music. That'll never change. I only did it this time as a favor for a friend." Seven stared at me for a long time. His eyes flickered with emotion. To him, I wasn't the same girl who used to laugh all the time and lead the team with a grin. He didn't speak for a while.

Then he finally asked, "If you didn't want to get involved, then why not hand the opportunity to me?" I raised both hands slightly. My tone dropped the kindness. It came out flat and sharp. "Sorry, Seven. It just happened. What happened back then still feels like a splinter buried in my hand. I can't pretend it's gone. I can't go on stage as Avi like nothing ever happened. This was the last time. I'm not doing it again." His eyebrows pinched tighter. His voice dropped, more gentle now, almost cautious. "Avi, I know how badly that hurt you. It was never your fault. We all deserved the truth.

I believed you. I still do, but-" "But that belief had strings attached, didn't it?" I didn't let him finish. Something slammed into my chest. It Chapter 188 Seven's Concern wasn't pain. Just pressure. 144 +20 Free Coins "We were on the same team. We had each other's backs. But whenever I clashed with Wisteria, you always stayed quiet. Every time. That belief you talk about? It never stood with me." Seven's face turned red right away. He opened his mouth, then shut it again. He tried to speak a few more times, but in the end, all he let out were stifled sounds. Nothing real came out.

"Seven," I said as I looked away. I couldn't stand to look at him like that. My voice dropped. "We can't be teammates, let alone friends. Don't come looking for me again." I turned and walked. Suddenly, his grip clamped down on my wrist. "Avi, she didn't mean it!" he blurted. His voice shook. "Wisteria's been talking about you for years. She wants

to say sorry. She wants to bring the band back together. She wants what we had. She wants the glory days again." Those two words-glory days-stabbed through me like a needle. My chest tightened, and a bitter laugh slipped out. I tore my wrist away.

Hard. So hard it even startled me. "Too bad. I'm not interested." I threw the words behind me and kept walking. I didn't glance back. I didn't stop until his presence faded. Then I took a long breath. The night air carried the smell of grass. Three years ago, just hearing Wisteria's name would've made me freeze. Now, I was calm. The betrayal and the lies didn't sting the same way anymore. Time had worn them down. What Seven said about Wisteria? It felt like a breeze brushing past my coat. No weight. No hold. Whatever happened back then... we're square now. 2/2 18:36 Thu, Jan 1 Ms. Mark

Chapter 189 A Ride Chapter 189 A Ride Amanda's POV: I'd been walking for a long time when a horn snapped me out of it. +20 Free Coins I looked up instinctively. A black van had pulled up in front of me. The window rolled down slowly. Alan leaned out. "Amanda, why are you out here alone?" I blinked. Seeing him caught me off guard. "I was on my way home." "Hop in. I'll give you a ride," Alan said right away. The door opened. I climbed in. Then I noticed someone already in the back. Samson. The air felt heavy all of a sudden. I spoke first.

"Didn't expect to see you here." Samson flipped a page in his file. He didn't look up. He just made a low sound, almost like a grunt. Alan jumped in to cover for him. "I picked my brother up from the airport. We just happened to drive by and saw you. You looked kinda off. Face all gloomy and everything." I raised a brow. "Since when do you care about my mood? That's not how you used to talk to me." Alan scratched his head and gave an awkward laugh. "Hey, Amanda, don't shoot down a guy trying to be decent. I'm just being a concerned friend.

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And yeah, back then you were loud, clumsy, and kind of a disaster. Now you're still clumsy and still a disaster, but I gotta admit ... you've grown on me." I actually found that funny. It didn't piss me off. I smiled. "Appreciate it. Heard from someone you're dropping a new track. Congrats." The second the new song was brought up, his grin stretched from ear to ear. He was practically glowing with excitement. "Thanks! You should come to the launch next week." I shut it down immediately. "Yeah, no. I'd rather not get eaten alive by your fans. But one of my friends is obsessed with you.

If you've got two tickets, I'll give them to her. She'll lose her mind." Alan didn't even blink. He turned to his assistant. "Johnny, give her two. Next Wednesday," he added. "Make sure your friend shows." I took the tickets and slipped them into my bag. "Thanks." "Don't mention it." Alan gave me this sharp little smirk. His gaze bounced between me and Samson, but he let it drop without a word. Johnny pulled two flashy gold tickets from his briefcase and handed them over. Alan's face was printed across both, shining like foil. They were blindingly bright.

I took them, and just as I opened my mouth to say something, I heard Johnny lean in close. "Alan, Wisteria reposted your teaser on Instagram. Her caption sounded pretty flirty. Want me to reply for you? Just to make it look respectful." 1/2 18:36 Thu, Jan 1 | Chapter 189 A Ride +20 Free Coins Alan's face turned cold so fast it was like a switch flipped. "Respectful?" He rolled his eyes. "She can post whatever she wants. It's got nothing to do with me." Johnny looked uncomfortable. "She's still respected in music.

Might come off bad if we act like she's invisible." "Music?" Alan let out a low, sharp laugh. He didn't bother lowering his voice. Everyone in the car heard him. "She's milked one old track for ten damn years. Now she's either piggybacking on trends or riding someone else's buzz. If I say anything back, tomorrow's headline will be 'Alan and Wisteria: Dating Rumors. I'm not playing that game.'" Johnny wiped sweat from his forehead and gave up. "Fine. I'll drop it. I'll have PR keep an eye on the comments." They kept talking. One sentence, then another. Neither of them noticed I'd gone rigid.

The edge of the ticket bent under my fingers. I'd crumpled it without realizing. My chest tightened like something sharp had jabbed it. It didn't hurt. But that old bitterness slipped right back in. Wisteria. That was the second time I'd heard her name today. Earlier this morning, Seven stood in front of me defending her. Said she didn't mean it. Said she wanted to apologize. And now? She was riding Alan's spotlight like it was hers. Wisteria. It really has been a while. Just don't know what kind of stage we'll be standing on next time we meet. Mark

Chapter 190 Meeting Hugh Amanda's POV: 44 +20 Free Coins The second our van pulled up to the South family estate, Alan waved us toward the entrance. He stayed back while Johnny grabbed him to talk PR. I followed Samson inside. We'd barely stepped into the foyer when I spotted Hugh sitting on the couch in a thick wool coat. His eyes locked straight on the front door. The moment he saw us, he sat up. His whole tone shifted, turning loud and warm. "Samson! Finally! You saw Dalton, right? Is he doing okay?" Samson stepped forward, took the hot tea from the butler, and handed it to him.

"Dalton's fine. He's got more energy than you. He kept asking about you. Said he's hoping you'll stop by Mooncrest Pack soon so you two can play chess again." "That old dog." Hugh let out a rough laugh, but the edges of his eyes crinkled with something that felt a little sad. "Just sitting through a long trip wears me out these days. Not sure I'll get to see him again." "Don't say that," I said, moving in to sit beside him. "You beat me in arm wrestling last time. You're gonna hit a hundred, easy. Next time Samson heads over, I'll go with you.

We'll visit Dalton together." Samson backed me up without missing a beat. "Yeah. Once things settle here, we'll all go." Hugh looked between the two of us. Then he let out a long breath. His voice dropped, changing directions. "Samson, you're not a kid anymore. You've been running Eclipse Pack like it's second nature. Maybe it's time you think about marriage. Pups. That whole thing." I froze, glass halfway to my lips. I

glanced over at Samson. His brow twitched. The question clearly rubbed him the wrong way. His voice was calm, but it had that edge. "Grandpa, I've got my own timeline.

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You don't have to stress over it." "How am I supposed to not worry?" Hugh's voice sank, heavy with meaning. "You've got to move forward. Whatever happened before, leave it there. If the person standing right in front of you is worth it, then don't screw it up. Hold on tight." His eyes brushed over me like a quiet warning. My ears burned with heat. I dropped my gaze and took a fake sip from my glass. Samson didn't even blink. His reply came flat and empty. "Yeah. Got it." The air turned stiff. I made up a reason, said goodnight, and walked upstairs.

But even as I climbed, a small ache tugged at my chest. What the hell had Samson been through? Derrick's POV: Once the footsteps faded out upstairs, I stepped from the shadows by the hall. I leaned against the stairwell post and ran my thumb along the edge of my cufflink. It was a beat-up old piece Grandpa tossed me when I turned eighteen. Looked ridiculous next to the row 1/2 18:36 Thu, Jan Chapter 190 Meeting Hugh +20 Free Coins of custom ones in Samson's office. The voices downstairs carried up like they were meant for me to hear.

Hugh's anxious tone when he said "marriage and kids," the way he slipped in that line about "the one right in front of you"-each word jabbed like a blade. All I wanted was a drink. Instead, I walked into a punch to the gut. Amanda had barely made it to the second floor when Grandpa picked up the phone. The soft ticking of the dial tone slammed through my skull like a drumbeat. "The kids are home now, Dalton," Grandpa said, voice low but practically glowing. "Don't worry. Amanda's staying with me. She won't be hurt, not even a little." Mr. Reeves laughed on the other end of the line.

Even from here, it hit loud and clear. "I trust you, old man. Samson's a solid one. He's good enough for my girl. But if he lays a finger on her, I'll tear him apart myself." Grandpa barked out a laugh. "You don't need to tell me twice." After that, I couldn't hear a word. Everything blurred. All that stuck in my ears was "daughter-in-law" and "good enough." I clenched my fists. The bones in my hands went pale. So that's what it was. Grandpa never even considered me. From day one, Amanda was meant to be Samson's mate. Me? Just the mistake. The bastard. Never even on the board.

I used to think she was just some guest of Samson's. I figured if I played it right, maybe I could get a piece of Samson's soft spot and use it to build some leverage in the pack. Now I saw the truth. This whole damn time, I'd been nothing but a joke. Grandpa never had plans for me. Never even looked my way. In this house, I don't belong. Downstairs, I heard him call the butler. They mumbled something low, but I didn't need to hear it to know what they were plotting. The matchmaking plan had begun.

I stepped away from the stairs, one slow inch at a time, Whatever light had been in my eyes faded out. If Grandpa only saw Samson ... and if this house was built to shut me

out... then so be it. I was done clinging to family. Amanda, the Eclipse Pack's control. If I wanted something, I'd take it myself. 2/2 Mark

Chapter 191 Training Camp Amanda's POV: I showed up at training camp early, clutching the two gold-stamped tickets like treasure. +20 Free Coins As soon as I reached the hall, I spotted Emily dashing toward class with her gym clothes bunched in her arms. Her ponytail bounced behind her like a squirrel on caffeine. "Emily!" I held up the tickets and waved. She whipped her head around. The second her eyes locked on the tickets, her gym clothes slipped from her arms and dropped to the floor. She took off like she'd been launched. "Tickets?"

Are those really for Alan's meet-and-greet?!" I laughed and handed them over. She shrieked when she saw the picture printed on them. Her hands trembled like crazy. "Alan gave them to me himself. Front row VIP. You'll get backstage access too. Photos included." "Amanda, you seriously saved my life!" Emily latched onto my arm and rubbed her cheek against it, eyes shining like she just struck gold. "Come with me, please? I'll freak out if I'm alone. I can't breathe unless you're next to me." I almost told her no. I didn't care about this event at all.

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I didn't want to show up somewhere that packed. But the second I caught that desperate look in her eyes, my words dried up. "Fine. I'll go." She let out a cheer right then and there. She grabbed my hand and locked in the time like it was a secret pact. Then she skipped off to grab her training gear from the floor. I watched her bounce away and gave a tired shake of my head. Alice laughed in the back of my mind. "This girl fits you. Way better than those phony elders in Glacier Pack." I stayed silent. I slid my hand into my pocket and felt for my phone.

Samson hadn't said anything about the marriage last night. Still, something about the way Hugh looked at me left an uneasy weight in my chest. By the time we made it to the venue on the day of the meet-and-greet, the line had already wrapped around the entire building. We waited forever before they finally let us inside. Alan walked out a few minutes later and kicked off his set. He started with some of his older songs. The crowd went wild, singing along like it was second nature. Their voices rose and dropped like ocean waves. Then the tempo slowed. A soft piano started playing.

I recognized the melody instantly. It was the one I helped rewrite. 1/2 18:36 Thu, Jan 1 MJ. Chapter 191 Training Camp 44) +20 Free Coins The live version was stripped down-just piano and voice. None of the polished gloss from the studio version. But that simplicity made it even warmer. Even Alice's tone softened. "The wolf spirit in this one is steady. It's working better than we expected. The calming effect is strong." I nodded faintly and scanned the room. Just a moment ago, people were screaming and jumping. Now, it felt like time slowed down.

Some fans had closed their eyes and started swaying, peaceful and still. That was exactly what I wanted when I rewrote it. A calm that settled in without anyone realizing it. As Alan sang the chorus, his gaze swept across the VIP section. When his eyes found me, he froze for a beat. Then he smiled wide and raised a brow, amused. Emily squeezed my hand so tight it almost went numb. She mouthed something silently. "He's so hot." Right then, my phone buzzed in my pocket. It cut through the moment like a slap. I figured it was junk, so I glanced down to turn it off. Then I saw the sender-Theo.

He never texted this late unless something was seriously wrong. I unlocked the screen in a rush. The second I saw the message, everything inside me turned cold. Mark

Chapter 192 Emergency Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins "Amanda, something's up. Got a tip from inside Eclipse Pack. Derrick's been talking to some branch leaders who don't like Samson. He's planning to make a move tonight at the council chamber. He wants to start a rebellion." A rebellion? I gripped my phone so tight my fingers went pale. "Amanda, what's going on?" Emily's voice broke through as she tapped my arm. Her face tightened with concern. "You look sick. Are you okay?" I didn't answer. My chest felt like it was about to explode. Derrick didn't carry as much influence as Samson.

But if he pulled those bitter old leaders to his side and struck fast enough, Samson might not be able to recover in time. I shot to my feet. Emily blinked at me, startled. "I need to go. Something's come up. Just wait for me after the show. I'll come back for you." She didn't even get a word out before I bolted for the exit. My screen was still glowing in my hand when Theo's second message landed. "I'm headed to Eclipse Pack now. Don't panic. Talk to Samson first.

See what he knows." Derrick's POV: Behind the council chamber's side door, my finger traced the cold edge of the wolf spirit dagger. The steel glinted, reflecting the mess brewing in my eyes. Muffled voices slipped through the narrow gap. A few regional heads were whispering complaints about Samson's grip on power and how he hoarded the resources. Every complaint was bait I had slipped them myself. My phone vibrated in my pocket. One of my contacts had texted me. "Samson's still stuck at the pack border. ETA's thirty minutes." I smirked and slid the blade back onto my belt.

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Thirty minutes was more than enough. I'd have the whole place lit before he showed up. A voice came from the shadows behind me. "Are you really doing this, Mr. Derrick? Samson's still your brother..." Brother? I turned sharply, my stare turning cold. "He's no brother of mine." That line cracked through the silence like glass. It blew open all the memories I had buried deep. I was twelve when my wolf spirit showed up for the first time. It wasn't the black wolf the Ortega family was known for. Mine was dull gray, still clinging to baby-soft fur around the paws.

That day, the council chamber was dead quiet. Everyone stared at the gray blur behind me. 1/2 18:36 Thu, Jan M Chapter 192 Emergency +20 Free Coins Dad's face turned hard. Mom covered her face and sobbed. And Samson, the one who should've been next to me, took a full step back. His wolf spirit had just awakened, sleek and dark, towering behind him like it owned the room. I couldn't even look at it. "That's not my kid." My father's voice slammed into me like a freight train. Every nerve went numb. That's when I found out the truth. I was the bastard.

My so-called mom wasn't even my real mother. Just the woman who raised me. Everything-the hugs, the smiles, the warmth-had been fake. But what wrecked me the most was how Samson looked at me. He used to keep me close, always stepping up for me. When someone messed with me, he'd scowl and say, "He's my brother." When I fell during training, he'd kneel and rub my knee like it meant something. After that day, though, his gaze turned cold. Distant. Suspicious. And worse-ashamed. "Your wolf spirit's impure.

Stay away from Samson." That was the first time Grandpa ever spoke to me like I didn't belong. His voice was flat, cold. He tossed me a dusty pair of cufflinks and called it my rite of passage. Samson, on the other hand, got a silver wolf badge-Dad made it himself. So I pushed myself hard. I trained until I couldn't breathe. I turned that gray wolf spirit into a bullet. Fast. Vicious. Precise. But no matter what I did, Samson's silver wolf always made me look like a damn joke. He was the heir. I was the shame they didn't want to claim. During a hunt, a crazed wild boar charged me.

It crushed my wolf spirit. I dropped into the snow, bleeding and broken. Samson ran back. His silver wolf ripped the beast's throat open. He dropped to his knees, pulled me up, but the second he touched my wolf spirit, his body tensed. "Derrick," he said, voice low. "Stop following me around. It's bad for you." I laid against his chest. His jacket smelled like cedar. I'd chased that smell since I was a kid. It was the only thing that felt like home. But that snow was too cold. Even in his arms, I couldn't feel a thing. "You think I'm filthy too, don't you?" I looked at him.

He didn't say anything. Just pulled me in tighter. So tight I almost thought he still cared.  
2/2 Mark

Chapter 193 Broken Man Derrick's POV: +20 Free Coins But I found out the truth later. That day, he saved me only because he didn't want Grandpa calling him heartless. He used to toss out the healing salves I brought him like they were trash. He'd pull away from me in public like I carried some kind of disease. And every time someone sneered and called me a bastard, he'd pretend like he didn't hear a damn thing. "Mr. Derrick, it's about time," my informant whispered at my side, snapping me out of it. I pulled in a breath and pushed open the council chamber doors.

The noise inside cut off instantly. Every pair of eyes locked on me. I walked to the seat next to the head chair and sat down. My fingertips ran along the armrest. Samson had sat here too many times to count. His scent still clung to the backrest, faint yet familiar. I

used to dream about sitting here with him, side by side. Again and again. But he never gave me the chance. "Samson makes decisions alone. He doesn't care if the pack lives or dies." I picked up the file on the table. My voice wasn't loud, but it reached every single person in the room.

"Today, I want you, the council of elders, to decide if he even deserves to be the first-in-line of Eclipse Pack's Alpha." Some voiced their agreement right away. Some didn't say a word. The murmurs rose like low thunder. I stared at the rising tension, but all I could see was Samson's face. That furrow in his brow. That rare smile. That awkward, stiff hug he gave me that one time. This wasn't about tearing everything down. I just needed him to look at me. I wasn't that small, helpless kid who needed shielding anymore. I needed him to feel something.

Even hate would have been better than this emptiness. Footsteps echoed outside the chamber. Heavy. Calm. Steady. He was here. I straightened my spine. Behind me, the gray wolf spirit took form in silence. The same one that once humiliated me in front of the pack. Today, it would fight for everything I wanted. It would fight to make him look at me and truly see me. Samson's POV: I had just put down the last signed report from the border when Cody burst in, dragging the freezing air in with him. His voice dropped low. "Mr. Ortega, we've got a problem at the council, chamber.

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Derrick just called in three elders. Says he's breaking the branch off. He's leading a standoff in the admin hall right now." My hand froze mid-signature. The pen bled a pool of ink onto the page, black and spreading outward. I 1/3 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 Chapter 193 Broken Man didn't move. My voice stayed even. "What's he asking for?" +20 Free Coins Cody blinked, clearly thrown by how calm I was. He scrambled to hand me the tablet. "He didn't say directly. Just told the council you're being reckless. That you've been ignoring the pack's needs." I flicked through the screen.

The names on the list were all familiar. Every last one of them was an old-school elder who hated my new policies. Of course. That was his style. Hit the weakest spot with precision. Cody spoke up again, carefully. "Want me to get the guard unit? We can't let him actually pull this off." I closed the file in front of me and stood up. I reached for the black coat hanging over the back of my chair. "Get the car. Bring the core guard team to admin. We're walking in to talk, not to start a war." He gave a quick nod and rushed out. The office fell quiet.

Outside, the wind and snow battered the windows. It sounded like soft fists slapping glass over and over. For a second, it took me back. Derrick had just turned twelve. It was winter. He'd just awakened his gray wolf spirit. The other kids had cornered him on the training grounds and were yelling "bastard" at him. I was the one who ran in and stood in front of him. He grabbed my coat and held on tight. His nails dug into my palm, hard enough to break skin. His voice didn't shake. "I'll get stronger than all of them, Samson." And he did.

The gray wolf got so fast the black wolf guards couldn't keep up. But I never once looked him in the eye and said, "You did good." Grandpa never told us the truth about him. But he didn't have to. The love letter hidden in Dad's study. Mom sobbing into her pillow at night. Derrick's face, a copy of Dad's down to the eyes. It was all there. All the proof anyone needed. He was the result of betrayal. I was born as Eclipse Pack's heir. And that meant one thing before all else. Protect my mother's name. That truth stood like a wall between us-tall, heavy, and unmoving.

He turned eighteen and handled the branch riot on his own. The celebration was loud. Grandpa just kept drinking. I stood there with the black wolf badge in my hand, fingers turning white. I had every chance to give it to him. But I didn't. He glanced down and saw it. His eyes dimmed, slow and hollow. Then he turned toward the elders, raised his glass, and smiled like nothing happened. "I just got lucky." That moment burned into me. Everything he'd done, every fight he won, every record he broke, all of it was just to hear us say one damn thing.

"You did good." The car stopped in front of the admin building. I could hear the voices inside already, loud and angry. I stepped out, and the cold slammed into my collar. The black wolf's presence spread from me, thick and steady. I didn't do it to scare him. I just needed him to know I hadn't come to shut him down. 5 The guards marched behind me in perfect rhythm. The moment I raised my hand, they stopped cold. The door to the admin office hung open just a crack. Derrick sat in the chair next to the head seat, rubbing 2/3 Chapter 193 Broken Man +20 Free Coins the armrest with his fingers.

The faint outline of the gray wolf spirit drifted behind him, flickering in and out like smoke. He whipped around at the sound of footsteps. His eyes flashed with surprise, then guarded suspicion, and buried just beneath it, a ripple of panic. Our eyes met, and the entire room seemed to freeze. 3/3 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 MJ Mark

Chapter 194 Confrontation Samson's POV: 4444 +20 Free Coins I walked over and sat across from him. I pushed the tablet across the table. "I've revised the resource allocation plan three times. The branch welfare policy you've mentioned is in there." He stared down at the screen, staying silent. One of the elders shifted, ready to speak. I shut him down with a look. "Derrick." My voice dropped. "Splitting the pack won't help you. And it sure as hell won't help Eclipse. If it's recognition you want, you're not gonna get it by forcing a takeover." He snapped his head right up.

His eyes were bloodshot. "Recognition? When have you ever given me that? In your eyes, I'm nothing but the bastard child. The one who shouldn't exist. The shame your mother had to carry!" That cut deep. Like a blade to the chest. I remembered the look in my mother's eyes when she saw him. It was never cruel. But it was never soft either. She didn't hate him. She just couldn't reach him. "I never saw you that way." I reached for the black wolf badge on the table. I'd had it made just for him. Smaller than mine, but etched with the Eclipse emblem all the same.

"I should've given this to you back then. But trying to tear the pack apart? That's the mistake you're making now." Derrick flinched. He kept his eyes on the crest. His fingers twitched, but he didn't touch it. "It's too late." He looked away. His voice strained. "The elders are already with me." I turned to the elders. I brought up the financial reports on the screen. "You'll get the resources you asked for. But if you push for a split, I'll sign the removal order myself." They started trading glances. Their faces turned grim. I didn't care. I only looked at Derrick.

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"You've wanted to manage this pack since we were kids. Now's your shot. The western branch is a mess. I'm giving it to you. If you pull it together, the badge is yours. So is the branch chief role." His eyes snapped up. Bloodshot, furious, broken. "You're handing it to me?" He laughed. Short, sharp, and bitter. "You think that fixes everything? A title and a desk? You think that'll shut them up when they call me a bastard? You think that'll make you finally see me as your brother?" He raised his voice. Rage cracked through every word. I clenched my hand against my knee.

My knuckles turned white. But I held my tone steady. "I know you've suffered. But ripping Eclipse apart isn't how you heal. This pack keeps you grounded. If you cut it down, where the hell are you gonna land?" One of the elders jumped in. "Derrick's right! Samson, you're just trying to stall. Why would we believe anything you say?" 1/2 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 M3 Chapter 194 Confrontation +20 Free Coins I didn't look at him. I didn't look away from Derrick. I did not believe at all that he'd actually destroy the place that raised him. "Keeps me grounded?" Derrick slammed the crest off the table.

It bounced against the wood with a harsh metallic crack that split through the silence. "It rotted years ago. The first time you all looked at me like trash. The day you kept that crest clutched in your hand and wouldn't give it up. The moment Grandpa tossed me his used cufflinks like I didn't matter. That's when I lost everything that kept me grounded." He stood. "I'm taking the western branch. The ones who hate you are coming with me. Either you let us walk, or I stop pretending we're still family." I sucked in a breath, shoving the chaos back down. Then I stood, slow and steady.

I was half a head taller. My shadow stretched over him. It weighed heavy. "Derrick." My voice came out cold and sharp. Each word hit like ice. "I'm asking one last time. Are you really gonna split this pack?" I stepped forward. I locked my eyes on his. The stubborn fire from when we were kids still burned in there. So did every ounce of pain he'd swallowed all these years. But there wasn't a trace of doubt in sight. The air inside the chamber felt like it had frozen over. None of the elders dared to breathe too loud. Outside, the storm pounded the windows.

The wind kept screaming through the trees, and the snow beat down in bursts like the world was trying to drown out what was about to happen. I stood there and waited for his answer. 2/2 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 Mark

Chapter 195 His Answer Samson's POV: "Yes." 044 +20 Free Coins Derrick said it so softly it could've been mistaken for the wind outside, but it landed on me like a cinderblock. My chest clenched. I froze up. My throat tightened as I tried to swallow, but I couldn't say a word. I had expected him to dig in. I hadn't expected him to burn the bridge behind him without looking back. He stared at my face, at the shock written all over it, and let out a crooked, smug grin. "Come on.

You really thought all I wanted was the western branch?" He took a step forward, stopping just inches from my shoulder. His voice dropped low. The bite in it cut through me like a blade. "I want the Alpha seat. The whole damn Eclipse Pack. I want everything you've got. Including Amanda." The moment he said her name, my entire body locked up. I turned to him, fast. The hunger in his eyes wasn't masked. Not even a little. That wasn't just resentment anymore. That was obsession. It was sick and bitter and years in the making. And now, he had fixed it all on Amanda.

I should've noticed it earlier. All those times he just so happened to conveniently show up around her training room weren't random. They were calculated. The way he looked at her reeked of ownership. "Touch her, and I swear, I'll end you." My voice lost all warmth. The fury in it made the air drop ten degrees. But Derrick didn't even flinch. In fact, he just laughed harder. "Try me. You already lost your brother. What makes you think you're gonna keep her safe?" He smacked my shoulder hard. The hit was rough. Every part of it screamed mockery. "In three days, I'm making it official.

The western branch goes independent. Better brace yourself, because you're gonna lose more than just appearances." He turned and walked out. The gray wolf spirit trailing behind him swept past the elders like a cold wind. He tossed one last line over his shoulder. "Anyone coming with me, don't wait." The elders hesitated. They looked at each other. Then they followed him out, shoulders tight and jaws clenched. The door slammed shut. The sound bounced through the room and left behind a mess. Scattered papers. A toppled cup.

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The black wolf badge he knocked off the table still lay on the floor, face down. I crouched down and picked it up. The edge was chipped. I ran my thumb over it. My chest felt like someone had stuck a weight in it. 1/3 Chapter 195 His Answer +20 Free Coins Cody walked in, being careful with every step. "Mr. Ortega, do you want us to have someone follow Mr. Derrick?" "No." I slipped the badge into my pocket. I took a long breath and crushed the storm inside my chest back down. "Tell the core elders. We're calling a crisis meeting first thing tomorrow." Cody nodded and walked out.

I stayed there, alone in the wrecked room. The storm outside roared louder now. The snow kept hammering the glass like a thousand tiny fists. I looked toward the door. For the first time in my life, I couldn't read him. The brother I raised was gone. Whatever he had turned into, I didn't know him anymore. By the time I made it back to the estate, it was almost morning. The lights in the living room were still on. Grandpa sat alone on

the couch. His tea had gone cold a while ago. When I stepped in, he stood up fast. His eyes were full of worry. "Samson, how'd it go?"

Did Derrick really walk away like that? He's not coming back?" I sat down next to him. I didn't sugarcoat it. I told him everything. Every word Derrick said. Every line he crossed. Including the part where he planned to take the whole damn pack. Grandpa let out a long breath and slammed his hand against the armrest. "This one's on me. I didn't handle his background the right way back then. I let him grow up buried in whispers. And when the two of you started drifting, I didn't stop it. That's how we got here." "It's not on you." I handed him a cup of tea that was still hot.

"I didn't do right by him either. I couldn't juggle Mom's feelings and his place in the family." Grandpa took a sip. His expression darkened slowly. "We can't let that damn announcement go public. Eclipse can't split. Call the elder council. I'll go with you. I'll deal with those old holdouts myself. They're only clinging to Derrick because they're bitter about the way resources are handed out. I'll cut that off at the root." "That's what I was thinking too." I nodded. "And Derrick's eyeing Amanda. I've already doubled her security. She's Dalton's granddaughter.

We can't risk anything happening to her while she's under our roof. And there's no way I'm letting him use her as bait." Grandpa's eyes went sharp in an instant. "He's out of his damn mind. Amanda's a good girl. He's got no right to even look her way. Don't worry. I'll have the butler watch her personally. She won't be left exposed." We stayed up a long while after that. We went over every angle, every word we'd need to use with the council, and every move Derrick might make next. By the time we finally headed to bed, the sky outside was already turning pale.

I had just reached the top of the stairs when I heard the front door open. Amanda had come back. 2/3 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 195 His Answer +20 Free Coins She stopped when she saw me. Then she smiled. "You're back. Alan's fan meeting went great. Emily cried, like, five times. No joke." That smile of hers hit like sunshine after a blizzard. Just like that, the pressure inside my chest eased. Then Derrick's voice echoed in my head like a blade slicing through skin. "Including Amanda." I turned away from her fast and kept my eyes off her face. He didn't want her for who she was.

He wanted her because she mattered to me. If I let her stay near me, she would just become a target. I'd be handing her over. "Yeah." My voice came out flat. "It's late. Go rest." I didn't give her time to answer. I walked upstairs right away. When I got back to my room, I leaned against the closed door and listened to the faint sound of her door shutting downstairs. My chest ached. It felt like something had settled in there and refused to move. 3/3 Mark

Chapter 196 Congratulations. Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins Emily sat right beside me, humming along to the last song like nothing was wrong. She had no idea how bad my mind was spinning. I slipped away, saying I needed the restroom, and then stepped into the far corner of the hallway. Then I called Theo. "Is it really that bad? Can Samson

keep things stable?" I kept my voice low, but the panic was already there. Since I came to Eclipse, it had started to feel like home. I didn't want to watch it break apart. Theo's voice came through calm and steady. "Don't freak out."

Eclipse Pack has deep roots. Samson's still got control of the forces and the resources. The elders tagging along with Derrick are just greedy. They won't make it far." He paused. Then his tone dropped lower. "Boss, this is their problem to fix. And right now, your identity's risky. If you get involved, it'll just get ugly. You'll also risk exposing the Dalton connection. That's not something we can afford right now." Alice agreed, "Theo's got it right. Right now, keeping your cards hidden is the most important thing."

Let Samson clean up his own house." I drew in a breath and looked around the hallway. Fans were waving signs and laughing just beyond the curtain. They were right. I wasn't part of Eclipse Pack. If I stepped in, I'd just make it worse. I hung up and went back to my seat. Alan had just finished the last song and was taking a bow. Emily turned to me with stars in her eyes. "He's unreal! Amanda, do you think he's gonna remember us?" I smiled and gave her a gentle pat on the back. I pushed everything else out of my mind.

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"Maybe you'll get to talk to him more during the backstage photo op." The photo session went way smoother than you the live sound would blow you away I I thought. Alan even recognized me when he saw me. "Told gave him a smile and congratulated him, didn't bring up Eclipse Pack at all. He had just finished his fan event. No point dragging him into a family disaster. As I walked out of the venue, Theo's second message popped up. "Derrick walked away from the talk. Says he'll lead the western branch out in three days."

Already left Eclipse Pack's core zone." I stared at the screen for a few seconds. The shock hit first. Then a weird sense of relief followed. Derrick knew my real face. As long as he stayed in Eclipse Pack, he'd always be a ticking bomb. Now that he took himself out, it saved me a huge headache. Alice stretched and yawned. "At least the guy's got guts. Too bad he's aiming them in the dumbest direction." 1/2 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 Chapter 196 Congratulations I didn't say anything. I ordered a ride and headed for Ortega Castle. When I walked into the estate, I ran right into Samson.

His footsteps slowed when he saw me. I pretended not to notice and gave him a light smile. "Hey. You're still up?" +20 Free Coins All I got was a short "Yeah." His voice was colder than usual. His eyes slid right past me like I wasn't even there. He headed upstairs without pausing. My smile held for a second. Then it cracked. Something in my chest felt tight. I didn't push it though. He wasn't in the mood to deal with me tonight. I made it back to my room, tossed my phone on the nightstand, and looked at my reflection. My face looked tired and kind of lost. I let out a quiet sigh.

"He's stressed. He's under too much pressure. Being cold is probably the only thing holding him together." I barely washed up. I flopped onto the bed and passed out. Didn't

wake up until noon. Emily's call shook me awake. She told me to get to the training camp. I got into my training gear, left the estate, and turned the corner. That was when someone stepped out from behind a tree and blocked my way. It was Derrick. He wore a black jacket. The wind had messed up his hair. His eyes locked on me. They weren't warm or sharp. They were strange. I didn't know what he wanted.

It made my skin crawl. "Amanda," he said, voice rough. "We need to talk." 9/9 Mark

Chapter 197 Derrick's Idea Derrick's POV: "Amanda, we need to talk." The moment I saw the tension in her eyes, I realized my voice had come out too rough. +20 Free Coins I stepped back and pushed down the edge in my tone. This wasn't the moment to pick a fight. I still had use for her. My thoughts flicked back to earlier tonight, inside the temporary meeting room of the western branch. The candles had burned low. The wax puddled at the base. I dropped Eclipse Pack's resource map onto the table. My finger jabbed the mining zones. "Eclipse Pack runs off eastern trade.

But the west has the power source. All the crystal stones come from our side. If we lock down the mines, give it three months, Samson will have no choice but to crawl back." The elders sat around the table. Doubt still lingered in their eyes. Mr. Zolensky adjusted his glasses. "Mr. Derrick, if Samson sends his guard team to wipe us out..." "He won't," I cut in. I snatched the wolf spirit dagger and drove it straight into the center of the map. "Eclipse Pack just came out of border chaos. Their guards are still recovering. Grandpa won't let another fight start inside the pack.

He'll step in and try to settle it. That's our opening. Once he steps in, we'll already be standing as an independent division. From there, Samson and I stand on the same level." That hit right where they were the weakest. Their gazes shifted across the table. Slowly, one by one, they all nodded. After the meeting, Mr. Loyrand leaned in close. His voice dropped, "Mr. Derrick, we still need backup. Samson has Dalton's family behind him. We..." He didn't need to finish. I already knew exactly what he meant. Amanda was the ideal card to play. The best kind of leverage.

Samson bent his own rules for her. He acted cold towards everyone else, but with her, he always gave in. He even let her move freely through Ortega Castle without asking. If I could pull her into my pack, then every secret she held-and every bit of influence she had over Samson-would become mine to use. The moment that thought sparked, it spread like dry brush in a windstorm. I didn't sleep. I got in the car and drove straight to Ortega Castle. "Let's talk somewhere private," Amanda said, dragging me out of my thoughts. She nodded toward the café on the corner. "Too many eyes around here.

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I'm not in the mood to start gossip." I followed her inside. We sat near the window in the far corner. 1/3 Chapter 197 Derrick's Idea +20 Free Coins As soon as the server walked off, she cut to the chase. "You're here about Eclipse Pack, aren't you?" "Yes and no." I stirred the coffee in front of me. I didn't take my eyes off hers. I watched every muscle

twitch in her face. "I'm founding a western pack. The base will be the crystal stone mines. I'm cutting all ties with Eclipse Pack. Amanda, I want you in." Her fingers froze around her glass. Her eyes were wide.

"You already know I stay out of your pack's drama. Why the hell would you ask me?" "Because you're not like the others." I leaned closer. My tone softened, but I couldn't hide the weight in my eyes. I wasn't here to beg. "And you've got secrets. Big ones. Even Samson treats you differently. He watches you closer than anyone. I'm offering you the position of deputy leader. The power, the resources-only a step behind mine. Samson would never hand you that much space to breathe." I thought she'd waver. No one walked away from that kind of deal.

Especially not someone like her, stuck under Eclipse Pack's thumb. But she didn't even pause. She just shook her head and spoke like her mind was already made up. "I'm not joining you." "Why the hell not?" My fingers clenched the spoon. The metal knocked hard against the inside of the cup. The sound was sharp, like it cut the air. "Whatever Samson promised you, I'll match it. I'll go bigger if I have to! Or do you just not believe I can pull this off?" "That's 's not the reason." She set her glass down. Her voice stayed cool. "This whole thing is your pack's internal feud.

I don't belong in that fight. And I'm not chasing the Alpha seat. I don't want to get dragged into you and your brother's mess." "You really think involved?" I laughed, but it came out bitter. It burned more than it helped. you're not "You think Samson sees you as one of his own? No. He's obsessed with your secrets. He just wants to keep you boxed up and under control. Last night, while he was drowning in pack issues, he still sent more guards to watch your place. That's not love. That's fear. He doesn't trust you." "That's between me and him. It has nothing to do with you." She stood.

She picked up her coat from the back of the chair. "My answer's not going to change. You should go find someone else." She left without another word. Didn't even glance over her shoulder. Every eye in the café stabbed into me. I sat there, seething, watching her disappear through the door. I reached out and smacked the cup off the table. The coffee flew across the map and spilled in a wide, muddy stain. They all said no. Samson. The elders. Amanda. All of them. I stared through the glass. Amanda's figure turned the corner and vanished.

The fire in my chest faded into 2/3 18:37 Thu, Jan Chapter 197 Derrick's Idea something colder. If she wouldn't come the easy way, I'd take the hard one. She'd stand next to me eventually. She'd be my ally, or my prisoner. +20 Free Coins Mark

Chapter 198 Samson's Move Samson's POV: At nine sharp, the Ortega estate's conference hall was packed. +20 Free Coins Grandpa sat at the head of the table, looking even more furious than yesterday. His hand slammed the table, again and again. "I want opinions. All of you. Now. What do you think about what Derrick just did?" Alan had just gotten back from the border. His coat was still dusty. His fists were tight.

"He's completely lost it. Splitting off like that? That's betrayal. I'll take the security team and drag his ass back myself." Josh jumped in right after.

"We can't let him destroy everything you and Samson worked so hard to build!" I sat to Grandpa's left, dragging my fingers along the cold edge of the table. I didn't speak. Their anger made sense. But Derrick wasn't the real problem. It was holding the western branch together after this. Cody stood behind me. He leaned in and spoke quietly. "Mr. Ortega, the tech department just sent this over. Crash report." I flipped the folder open. My chest tightened. Three months ago, I crashed my car. I thought it was just wear and tear. Turns out, I was wrong. The brake line had been sliced clean.

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It wasn't an accident. Someone sabotaged it. One of the surveillance screenshots showed a man in a mechanic's uniform stepping into frame. The side profile was crystal clear. It was Derrick's personal bodyguard. Alan caught the shift in my expression. "Hey, what's going on?" He leaned over, caught sight of the page, and snapped. "Derrick did that? He tried to kill you?" The entire room froze. Every pair of eyes turned to me. Grandpa snatched the file and flipped through it. His hands shook. His beard trembled with rage. "That ungrateful brat. I raised him.

And he repays us like this?" I closed my eyes. I saw a twelve-year-old Derrick clinging to the hem of my shirt. I saw the man he grew into, staring at my badge like he'd been robbed. I looked back down at the words on the report. Deliberate sabotage. It felt like someone had punched me straight in the chest. Everything locked up. This wasn't some angry moment. He had been planning it for a long time. Even blood didn't matter to him anymore. "We're not arresting him yet," I said, eyes open again. My voice had no warmth left. "The western branch is in chaos. Miners are striking.

A few mines already shut down. We've got less than a week's worth of energy left. Alan, take the security team and stabilize the mines. Patrick, call our southern partners and borrow emergency units. Grandpa, I need you to talk to the core elders. Make sure Derrick's loyalists don't start turning them." 1/2 18:37 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 198 Samson's Move Grandpa looked at me. "And what are you doing?" +20 Free Coins "I'm going back to the Operations Department." I stood. My voice turned grim. "Derrick's gonna use the mess to stir up more trouble.

I'll track his moves and stabilize the financials. I'm not letting him drag the Eclipse Pack into the dirt." I left the hall. The sun outside was blinding, but the cold never left me. Cody followed, voice low. "About the crash ... should we tell Ms. Lamb? need to be on guard." He's been bothering her. She might I paused. I thought about her expression from last night. That frozen, uneasy smile. If I told her now, it would only pull her in deeper. If I didn't, she might get caught in something she didn't see coming. I shook my head. "Not yet. I've already doubled her security.

Once things are settled, I'll handle him myself." I got into the car. The city raced past the window like a blur of color. I took out my phone. There was a message from Amanda. It came in last night. She'd asked if I was okay. I stared at the screen for a while, then typed back. "Just slammed with work. Don't worry." Derrick, I gave you the shot to earn what you wanted. You burned it. You crossed the line and cracked this pack down the middle. Don't think I'll go easy on you just because we share the same last name. 2/2 18:38 Thu, Jan 1 M? Mark

Chapter 199 News From Theo Amanda's POV: +20 Free Coins Training wasn't even finished when Theo called. His voice sounded heavier than before. "Boss, Eclipse Pack's falling apart. The western branch walked out. Mines are shut down. Samson's drowning. He hasn't even had time to eat." I stepped into the corner of the training room with the phone in hand. My eyes stayed on the students sparring across the mat. My brow pulled tight. "Was it Derrick?" "It was his people who stirred it up," Theo said. "Oh, and I found something else. Samson's crash three months ago? That wasn't an accident.

Derrick rigged it. He's gone off the deep end. Tried to kill his own brother." My fingers curled hard into a fist. My knuckles turned pale from the pressure. Derrick really pushed it that far just for power. He already tried to kill Samson. He tried to rope me in and failed. What if I'm next? Alice's voice filled my head. It was low and sharp. "Samson's boxed in from all sides. We can't just sit around. If Eclipse Pack crumbles, Derrick's power spreads. That'll hit us too." I gave a short nod. My plan was already in place. I hung up on Theo and dialed a secure line.

The call went through to Casey, my father's old officer from Glacier Pack. He'd stayed loyal for years. After I left the north, I handed all my assets and control over to him. "Ms. Amanda." Casey's voice came in calm and even. "You finally called. What do you need?" "Casey, I need your help with two things." I kept my voice low and glanced around to make sure no one was close. "First, take half of the energy stockpile I stored in the northern mines and reroute it to Eclipse Pack's east warehouse, Cody's the contact. Tell him it's aid from the southern partner. Don't link it back to me.

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Second, send a few agents who know how to track and gather intel. I want Derrick under a microscope. If he so much as aims at any of Eclipse Pack's core, I want to hear about it the second it happens." "Understood," he replied right away. "I can start the energy transfer today. The agents will arrive first thing in the morning. Are you in danger over there? Should I bring the guard unit with me?" I gave a light laugh. "Samson's got the internal stuff under control. I'm just stepping in to back him up. Just keep everything off the record.

No one can trace this to me." After I ended the call, I leaned back against the wall. The bright lights above the training mats glared down at me. A breath I didn't know I was holding slipped out of me. Samson could be cold, but he and Hugh had always had my

back. Eclipse Pack was my one anchor in this place. Now that it was in trouble, there was no way I'd sit still. 1/2 18.38 hu, Jan Chapter 199 News From Theo +20 Free Coins "Amanda! Quit spacing out! It's our turn to spar!" Emily jogged over and tapped my shoulder. "You've been out of it all morning.

"Are you feeling sick?" I slipped my phone into my pocket and smiled. "Nah. Just had something on my mind. Come on, I've got a new move I wanna try on you." As we sparred, I caught a figure near the training room door from the corner of my eye. It was one of Samson's men. He gave me a small nod, then backed out of the doorway without a sound. I knew what that meant. Samson had someone watching me. Samson, you don't have to carry this by yourself. If your pack's falling apart, I won't stand by and watch. Just take this as my way of saying thanks. For everything you've done. 2/2 Mark

Chapter 200 Amanda's Resolve Chapter 200 Amanda's Resolve Amanda's POV: Derrick can claw and tear all he wants. I'm not letting Eclipse Pack fall. +20 Free Coins Last week, Hugh handed over some of the reins for diplomacy and logistics. The look in his eyes told me. he meant every word. I wouldn't let him down. After changing out of my training gear, I made my way to the Operations Department. The place felt oddly hollow compared to usual. The girl at the front desk looked like she'd been crying. Her eyes were still red. When she saw me, she jumped up from her seat. "Ms. Lamb, you're here.

Three more people from logistics quit this morning. They said they're afraid Derrick might go after them." I nodded and scanned the floor. Three workstations by the window sat empty. Papers still covered the desks. A nearby bin overflowed with scrapped reports. Even the break room, which was usually buzzing, sat quiet like someone had cut the power. The way the morale had collapsed across the department hit harder than the crystal mine shutting down. "Hand me the resignation forms. I'll take care of them." I took the folder from the receptionist.

My finger slid across the "personal reasons" listed under the exit form. My chest tightened. "Also, tell everyone who's still on the clock to meet in the small conference room. They have ten minutes." Once that was done, I turned and headed upstairs. I knocked gently. Samson's deep voice responded from inside. "Come in." I pushed the door open and stopped. He was surrounded by stacks of files. His black shirt sleeves were rolled up to his forearms, showing lean muscle. The gold-rimmed glasses on his nose softened his usual edge. He didn't look sharp tonight.

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He looked worn out, yet, elegant-in a quiet, tired way. He looked up. The moment he saw me, something behind his lenses softened. "You made it." I set the meeting notes on the edge of his desk and handed him a copy of the schedule. "Here's the damage summary from all the branches. I marked which projects need immediate funding. The three envoy meetings are all moved to tomorrow morning, so they won't clash with the

mining talks." He flipped through a few pages. His finger stopped at the line labeled "Energy Support From Southern Pack." I'd asked Casey to handle that.

Now it sat quietly under the title "ally support." He didn't ask. He didn't need to. He just looked up and gave me the smallest smile. "You've been working hard." I didn't mention the tension in the office. I didn't ask about the strike. I just smiled, nodded, and stepped out. The whole day ran by like a machine. 1/3 18:38 Thu, Jan 1 M Chapter 200  
Amanda's Resolve +20 Free Coins I had to calm the people who were quitting, organize the fuel deliveries, and go over the supply chain numbers. I didn't have time to eat. I tore into a piece of bread between calls.

By the time I wrapped up the last file, the sky outside was black. Most of the lights in the office had gone out. Only the lamp on my desk was still on. I rolled my shoulders and leaned forward. I just wanted a second to rest. I didn't even notice when I fell asleep. Samson's POV: By eleven, most of the Operations Department was gone. Only the top office still had its lights on. I stepped out of my office and saw Amanda asleep at her desk. My steps slowed. I moved in quiet, trying not to wake her. I walked over and stood above her. Her face was soft in her sleep. It melted my heart.

I'd spent so many years handling everything alone. I got used to going through every storm without backup. I'd forgotten what it felt like to have someone steady beside me. But now, that warmth-this comfort-it was coming from Amanda. A smile tugged at my lips. I tapped the desk with my knuckle. "Come on. Don't sleep here. Go home and rest." She stirred. Her eyes fluttered open. When she saw me, the sleep vanished instantly. She shot up. "Samson? What are you doing here?" I pointed Cup at the wall clock. "It's late. Time to go." She glanced up. Eleven. She Eleven. She shut her laptop fast.

"Okay, I'm heading out!" I smiled. "I'll come with you." We stepped into the elevating holding together?" together. Amanda turned and glanced over. "Samson, is Eclipse Pack ... still She didn't finish, but I didn't need her to. I answered flatly. "You think I can't handle it?" ... She blinked. Her face said she didn't know what I meant. I didn't explain. I let the silence hang. She looked rattled. "Samson, could you quit being so vague and just say you what mean?" ♫ I let out a low chuckle and reached my hand toward her. I paused midair for two seconds, then gave her head a soft pat.

2/3 Chapter 200 Amanda's Resolve +20 Free Coins "Relax. Everything's going to be fine. You shouldn't be worrying about this right now. What you need is to head home and get some real sleep. Who knows? Maybe when you wake up tomorrow, everything will look different." 3/3 18:38 Thu, Jan 1 M Mark