

Awakening Love: Reborn to Be His Duchess Novel

We Had Something Real But Didn't Handle It Right

To Communicate Better Novel 2

Chapter 2

Lylah's POV

Pale morning light bled slowly into Blackfang territory, washing the land in silver and ash. I left the manor before the pack fully stirred, heading toward the pack post office.

Tiara, my best friend, was already there, leaning against the wooden beam.

"This is our meeting spot, Birthday girl? How chic." She teased, then grinned. "Still, Happiest birthday to you, Lylah darling."

"Thank you. And thanks for agreeing to help me."

She tilted her head, "You're alone? I think this is the first time I've ever seen you without your brooding Alpha shadow."

She meant Rowan.

It wasn't a secret anymore how I'd followed Alpha Rowan like a pup, bound to him by more than habit, by something raw and aching that everyone could see. Heat crawled up my neck.

"He has nothing to do with today. Let's not talk about him."

"Oh, Selene! Did I hear that right?"

"I need your help," I cut in, "Tell me how to submit my name to the Mate-market."

Her jaw dropped dramatically.

The Mate-market was half tradition, half gamble—a system unmated wolves used to send their profiles across packs, letting fate, scent, and the Moon decide. Tiara was infamous for navigating it. I wanted my name there. Open. Available.

“Lylah, you can’t do that unless you’re completely unmated. And unless you don’t have a terrifying Alpha who might rip my throat out for helping you.” She hissed.

I met her eyes. “Oh, Tiara. Rowan, and I are Done.”

She gasped.

Done.

The word felt foreign, as if it belonged to another love story, not mine. Not after the night Rowan had found us, when Selestine, my timid wolf, had surged awake for the first time.

His presence was an intoxicating, dangerous current. Strong enough to pull us under. We knew the risk, yet we still dove in, forgetting how fragile we truly were.

Naive little wolf, caught in a trap we mistook for Moon Goddess’ fate.

After we finished at the post office, Tiara and I crossed into the Pack’s square.

The scent of damp earth filled my lungs, followed by the sharp rose scent cut through it.

“Isn’t that Alpha Eldric’s daughter?” Someone shouted.

“Which one?”

“The beautiful one! Lady Cora of Ironcrest Pack!”

Tiara stiffened beside me. “What is that she-wolf doing in our Pack?”

I didn’t react. I’d known since yesterday that Cora was here.

Cora stood at the center of the square, her dress flowing like silk caught in the wind, her hair shining as though the sun favored her alone.

“Lady Cora, your necklace is stunning!” A girl gushed. “That must’ve cost a fortune.”

Cora touched the diamond at her throat, eyes glowing. “This is from someone special, given as a birthday gift today.”

Yes. We shared the same birthday.

“Someone special? Your mate? Is he from Blackfang Pack? We’d be so honored to welcome you here!”

Cora laughed softly, covering her lips. “You’ll find out soon. It’s meant to be a surprise.”

I remember how Rowan had left before dawn.

How there’s no cake, no candle, no kiss pressed to my brow like last year. He hadn’t remembered my birthday at all.

But he remembered hers.

For years, when everyone else chose Cora and dismissed me, when they wounded me, I believed Rowan was different.

How foolish I’d been.

As the day wore on, Tiara went home. I couldn’t return to Rowan’s mansion—the place we’d shared everything for five years—so I went to my mentor’s office instead.

“Lylah?” He rose to his feet as I stepped into the room, surprise flickering across his face. “I didn’t expect to see you today. Are you here to discuss your failed admission?”

“No,” I said, steadying my voice.

“Last month you offered me a position as a junior assistant at Lunar Grace, Mr Stone. I turned it down.” I swallowed. “Is the offer still open?”

His eyes widened.

Then he smiled. “Of course! It’s always been open. You can go whenever you’re ready.”

Footsteps echoed in the corridor.

Mr. Stone stiffened.

“Wait here,” he said quickly. “I have important guests. Don’t leave until I return.”

He snatched up a glossy black box etched with a familiar sigil and rushed out, the door slamming shut behind him.

A familiar scent drifted through the crack, cold pine.

My heart sank.

I moved closer and peeked through the glass.

Rowan stood there. Holding Cora’s waist.

Mr. Stone handed her the box. “Happy birthday, Lady Cora. This is your uniform. You’ve been officially accepted into the Academy of Lunar Grace.”

Cora’s face lit up. “Thank you!”

“It arrived early because Alpha Rowan requested it. He wanted you to receive it on your special day.”

She turned to Rowan and rose onto her toes to kiss his cheek.

“After the necklace, another gift?” she teased. “You’re so thoughtful, Alpha.”

Rowan didn’t reply.

But his lips curved into a soft smile. His gaze warmed as it rested on her, the kind of look he’d never given lightly.

“May I ask one more thing?” Cora said.

“Of course.”

“Run with me. Let our wolves loose beneath the trees, just the two of us.”

Rowan nodded without hesitation.

My fingers curled into my palms.

I’d begged him once to do that with me. To run together, to deepen what we had. He’d refused, claiming his leg injury made it impossible.

Yet for Cora, he agreed instantly.

Sara Lili

Sara Lili is a daring romance writer who turns icy landscapes into scenes of fiery passion. She loves crafting hot love stories while embracing the chill of Iceland's breathtaking cold.

I returned to the manor and shut myself inside my room.

The space reeked of Alpha indulgence, luxuries Rowan had claimed for me after Blackwood Pack rose to dominance. Velvet-lined boxes of diamonds and enchanted gems. Robes spun from pure winter fur.

None of it felt like mine anymore.

I dragged my suitcase from beneath the bed and began packing the few simple clothes I'd bought myself over the years.

Just as I folded the last shirt, my phone buzzed to life.

'Lylah, the Mate-market is buzzing! Your profile has drawn more than fifty unmated males already! Mentioning Lunar Grace was a brilliant move, but are you really leaving? How about Alpha Rowan? I never believed he'd allow you that much distance.'

A bitter smile curved my lips.

Once, I would have waited for permission. Once, my feeling for him would have tightened around my ribs at the thought of disobedience.

But that girl was gone.

Suddenly, a knock struck the door.

I sighed. I was too exhausted to face anyone.

"Lylah," Rowan's voice carried through the wood, "Open up. I have something for you."

I crossed the room and slid the door open.

A chorus of voices burst forth at once.

"Surprise! Happy birthday, Lylah!"

Rowan stood at the center, smiling as if nothing in the world was amiss. In his hand rested a small velvet box. Behind him were Gavriel, his Beta, and Rosella—Gavriel’s mate—both wearing practiced smiles.

“What is this?” I asked.

“What else?” Gavriel laughed. “A surprise. Alpha’s been driving us mad preparing this since morning.”

Morning.

The same morning he’d spent with Cora at my mentor’s office.

I smiled anyway.

“Go on, Alpha,” Rosella urged brightly. “Give her the special gift you’ve been planning all week.”

Rowan stepped closer and opened the box.

His scent, and the unmistakable trace of the deep wood, rolled over me. Telling me exactly where he’d been moments ago.

“I’ll put this gift on you,” Rowan said.

Inside lay a tiny bracelet set with a small amethyst. Pretty. Modest.

A diminished echo of the elaborate necklace he’d given Cora.

Rowan fastened it around my wrist.

“Thank you,” I managed.

His brows knit. “You sound distant, little moon. Aren’t you happy? You used to light up whenever I gave you gifts. You’d jump into my arms. Where did that go?”

“I’m just tired, Rowan.”

Rosella tilted her head, her lips curving into a poisonous smile. “Perhaps the bracelet disappointed her, Alpha. Too simple.”

“No,” Rowan said quickly, cupping my cheek. “I know my Lylah. She prefers simple things. Anything extravagant wouldn’t suit her.”

I caught the amused glance Gavriel and Rosella exchanged.

“You smell like the woods,” I said lightly. “Did you just finish a run? I thought you’d stopped doing that.”

He stiffened for half a heartbeat.

“Of course not. I was at my office.” The answer came too fast. “Actually, I just remembered I have unfinished work. I should go.”

Of course.

He kissed my cheek and left, his presence fading down the hall.

The familiar flutter in my chest never came.

Selestine remained silent, the bond unmoved, as if something vital had already snapped.

Night fell.

I stood behind the counter of the small restaurant where I’d been working part-time for six months. Rowan knew I worked, but he’d never once asked where. I’d wanted savings, something that belonged to me alone. Tonight, I was grateful for that foresight.

The door opened.

And whispers rippled through the room like wind through tall grass.

“That’s Alpha Rowan!”

“And Lady Cora.”

“They look like they were paired by Selene herself.”

I froze.

At the far end of the room, Rowan entered with Cora at his side. Gavriel and Rosella followed. Rowan’s hand never left Cora’s waist, his touch openly possessive, his power flaring softly around her in a way he no longer bothered to hide.

“I hope I’m not inconveniencing anyone,” Cora said demurely.

“Of course not, Lady Cora,” Rosella replied warmly, so different from the honeyed venom she used on me. “It’s your birthday. Alpha Rowan wants everything perfect.”

A server placed a cake before them, candles flickering.

“Go on,” Rowan said gently. “Make a wish.”

“A-a wish?”

“Yes. Anything.”

She glanced at him through her lashes. “Would it be all right if I prayed to Selene to bind me to you, Alpha?”

Rowan flushed.

Gavriel sucked in a breath. “Alpha, that’s a signal.”

Rosella clapped her hands softly. “It means you should mark her. Make her your Luna!”

Their table glowed with warmth and laughter, promise thick in the air.

Behind the counter, my wolf finally stirred. Not in pain, but aching rage.

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To Communicate Better Novel

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The lights in my chamber were turned low, a soft amber glow settling over the walls like a held breath.

After a long bath that washed away the ache in my muscles and the lingering scent of toil, I sat at the edge of my bed.

My phone lit up. An unfamiliar number but I knew exactly who it was.

I slid my finger across the screen.

“Lady Lylah,” a deep, velvet voice greeted. “This is Riven of the Moonclaw Pack. It still feels unreal that you accepted my call.”

Tiara had told me he hadn’t looked away from my profile even once after receiving it. Curiosity had led me to request his in return, and from the first reading, I’d felt a quiet resonance.

“Lylah Moonrow of Blackfang Pack,” I replied.

A low chuckle sounded on the other end. “Your voice... It’s soft. Just as I imagined.”

He paused, then added, “My pack’s territory lies so close to Lunar Grace. Once you arrive, I’ll come for you myself if you permit it. I want to spend every day with you.”

There was no arrogance in his words, only sincerity.

Riven was a warrior and a part-time tutor at the academy according to his profile. His Pack, Moonclaw, was far from ordinary. Led by the infamous Alpha Ezra, it had expanded its influence through agriculture and commerce, rising to rival Rowan’s technological empire. Second only to Blackfang in strength.

“May I ask something about my soon-to-be mate?” He said softly.

“Yes.”

“Are you truly still unmated?” His curiosity was genuine.

“I haven’t found the right one yet,” I answered calmly. “After giving the best of myself, I couldn’t allow just anyone to take me. Certainly not a man lacking honor.”

He laughed, rich and approving. “You’re right. I admire that you value yourself. A woman with dignity is rare these days.”

A pause.

Then, gentler, “Before we end this call, happy belated birthday. I’ll bring you a gift when you arrive. Sleep well, Lady Lylah.”

“Sleep well.”

The line went dead.

We had spoken only once, yet I already had a great deal of respect for him.

Lady.

He said it with respect, when everyone here and in my former pack had only ever spoken my name like an insult.

The door slammed open.

“I’m back from work,” Rowan announced, already striding toward me.

My smile vanished.

The air thickened, my wolf shrinking back as the familiar pressure of his presence filled the room.

“Going to sleep?” His gaze flicked over me, possessive. “I was planning to take you out to dinner with my friends.”

“I’ve eaten. You can go without me.”

He frowned. “Really? We’re going to your favorite restaurant. You always wanted to come when I was with them. Why refuse now?”

I pushed past him, needing space.

“I just got back from work. I need rest. Tomorrow I’m delivering my graduation speech and I want it flawless.”

“Ah. The speech.” Rowan’s eyes drifted to my phone, still warm from the call. Something dark flashed in his gaze—territorial, dangerous—but he masked it quickly.

“Very well,” he said lightly. “We’ll have dinner another time. Anywhere you want.”

I murmured a response.

He left without protest.

I was about to close the door when a maid approached, “Beta Gavriel requests to see you.”

My stomach tightened.

I hurried downstairs to the guest chamber.

“What is it?” I asked, keeping my tone steady.

Why was Gavriel here? Had Rowan canceled the dinner?

Ah, he’s probably at Cora’s place now.

Gavriel’s expression was sharp, his dislike for me barely concealed. “I’m here on behalf of Hector, head of the Pack High Council.”

My pulse quickened.

“At tomorrow’s graduation ceremony,” he continued coldly, “you will not be attending. Nor will you be delivering the speech. A replacement has been chosen.”

“What?”

Selestine stirred violently beneath my skin. My fists clenched.

Gavriel’s lips curled into a smug smile. “This decision is final.”

Impossible.

The headmaster of Blackfang College himself had chosen my speech after reviewing twenty submissions. Mr. Stone, my mentor, had praised my work. I had spent a month perfecting it.

“The ceremony cannot proceed without my speech!” I said, my voice trembling with restrained power. “The headmaster approved it two weeks ago!”

My eyes must have begun to glow, because Gavriel’s brow lifted.

“The college answers to the High Council, Lylah,” he said flatly. “Your name has been removed from the agenda. And if you insist on attending tomorrow,”

He leaned closer, voice dropping.

“You will be dragged from the Pack’s central hall by force.”

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Alpha

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Morning mist clung to the Pack's Central Hall when I arrived, pale and restless as a living thing. It curled around my ankles as I stepped into the crowd gathered outside, their whispers slicing sharper than claws.

"Isn't that the Mutt?"

"What is she doing here? Goddess, I hope she's not here to cause trouble."

Guards moved to intercept me, hands hovering near their weapons.

But the moment they caught sight of my elongated claws and the faint silver glow burning in my eyes- Selestine bristling beneath my skin-they faltered.

I didn't slow down.

Bang!

My foot crashed into the doors, kicking them open.

Warmth and laughter spilled from within, mocking the storm clawing through my chest. Cora stood at the center of it, framed by Hector and Gavriel.

"It's impressive you managed to memorize a speech like that overnight, Lady Cora," Hector said, pride heavy in his tone. "I have no doubt your performance tomorrow will be flawless."

Cora giggled, lowering her lashes. "Thank you, sir. But, is it truly all right that I used this beautifully written text?"

"Of course," Gavriel replied smoothly. "It's an honor enough that you're delivering the speech. You shouldn't exhaust yourself writing one from scratch."

Their laughter grated against my bones.

“So theft is how y’all disguise incompetence these days?” My voice sliced through their laughter.

Silence snapped into place.

All three turned toward me.

“Lylah.” Hector’s face hardened instantly.

Cora blinked, wide-eyed, innocence perfectly arranged.

“That speech text,” I said, stepping forward, my presence thickening the air. “Is mine. I wrote every single word. And I won’t let anyone use it without my consent.”

Hector stepped in front of Cora, broad shoulders blocking her from view, his gaze cutting into me. “Who do you think you are?”

“We don’t need your approval. Alpha Rowan has already given his permission.” Gavriel sneered, his gaze sliding over me in open dismissal. “The fact that he agreed so easily should tell you how much your work is worth to him.”

They were smiling now. Both of them.

As if they’d been waiting for this moment.

“What...?” Cora whispered. “So the speech belongs to Lylah?”

widened, fear fluttering there, but not guilt. Never guilt.

Why would she feel guilty? She had asked Selene herself to bind Rowan to her, knowing exactly what he

was to me.

The paper trembled in her hands.

Our gazes locked.

She shrank back.

Something inside me snapped.

Selestine surged forward, her growl vibrating through my bones as my claws sharpened, power flooding my limbs. In a heartbeat, I crossed the distance between us, rage burning hot and feral.

But a hand clamped around my wrist.

“How dare you raise your hand against Lady Cora?” Hector snarled, teeth bared

“I don’t give a fuck about her,” I hissed. “I want the paper. That’s all.”

“It’s not yours anymore.”

Gavriel slid an arm around Cora’s shoulders, protective, already turning her away. But she resisted, her eyes fixed on me.

“Lylah,” she said, voice trembling. “I-I didn’t know it was yours... I-I’m so sorry.”

Tears welled, glistening, perfectly timed.

The crowd had gathered by then; the committee, administrators, and pack elders. Their murmurs spread like poison through the hall.

“ Poor Lady Cora. She doesn’t deserve to face this feral mutt’s jealousy,”

“So this is who Alpha Rowan favored all this time? So uncivilized. No wonder she’s being replaced.”

“Know your place, Lylah. Walk away,”

Hector turned to me, satisfaction gleaming in his eyes. “Are you satisfied now? You forced her to apologize

for something that wasn’t even her fault. Now leave.”

Of course it wasn’t her fault, it was mine.

For letting her steal my place at Lunar Grace.

For letting her reach for Rowan fully aware of the heart she was breaking.

And now this.

“Beta Gavriel,” Hector ordered coolly, “take Lady Cora away. She doesn’t need to witness this shit.”

Then, to me, voice lowering with threat, “Leave. Or shall I let Alpha Rowan hear of your shameful display?”

“Let him hear,” I said, forcing my wrist free. “Let the entire pack hear.”

Behind me, Cora’s sobs rose, pleading with Gavriel to stop this, insisting she felt só guilty, that she would apologize to me later.

“Guards!” Hector barked.

Hands grabbed at me, but I twisted free, forcing Selestine down, clinging to the last thread of restraint.

I would not give them violence. Not today.

“My text,” I said, my voice deadly calm. “Give it back. Or I will spread this beyond Blackfang, to every pack and every council. Your reputation will rot. Your name will never recover.”

“So you want this the hard way?” Hector’s lips curled. “Fine.”

He seized me by the back of my collar and dragged me forward himself. The High Council’s dais loomed ahead, cold stone and towering pillars.

I struggled, kicking, my boots scraping uselessly as he hauled me like a captured animal.

My footing slipped.

Stone slammed into my foot, pain exploding up my leg as I crashed against the pulpit.

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The bandage wrapped around my leg burned as if a silver pressed to skin, pulsing with every heartbeat. After the incident, they rushed me to the infirmary.

The healer stitched the torn flesh and insisted I stay under observation, warning of infection and delayed healing. But I refused. I wanted my room.

I had barely settled onto the edge of the bed when the door flew open.

“Lylah!” Rowan stormed in.

His expression shattered the moment he saw me sitting there, pale and shaking despite myself.

touch.

“How are you?” he demanded softly. “Does it still hurt?”

“It doesn’t.”

His jaw tightened. “Don’t lie to me. The healer said it needed four stitches. You don’t have to be strong all the time, Lylah.”

Something in his voice pulled me back into those hard years we had survived together.

“It isn’t just this wound that hurts,” I said.

His hand, resting on my thigh, stilled.

Rowan pulled it away as if burned, his gaze dropping to the floor, guilt thick in the air.

“You will have justice,” His voice solemn, Alpha-cold. “I swear it on my name. Hector has been stripped of his position and he will never hold power in my Pack again. The council, the College, Hector himself, will issue a formal apology to you.”

I said nothing.

Rowan knew that wasn’t what I wanted.

“Only them?” I asked.

“Lylah.” He took my hand again, his grip firm. “Hector was the one who stole your work, not Cora. She didn’t even know the speech was yours.”

I withdrew my hand and stood, ignoring the sharp protest from my leg.

I stared past him, at the wall, at anything that wasn't the man I had once trusted with my life.

"I agreed to let Cora give the speech to help you," Rowan continued, his hand settling on my shoulder. "For five years you've never truly rested. You took care of me and my Pack, then sacrificed your sleep and your health just to earn your place at Lunar Grace. I think it would be better if someone else handled this speech."

His voice softened, almost pleading.

"I invited Cora and your parents to preserve the alliance between our Packs. She arrived without time to prepare a draft. Consider this helping your sister, alright?"

He wasn't wrong.

For five years, I had given everything.

When the silver trap broke Rowan's leg and the world branded him a crippled Alpha, when his Pack splintered and allies turned their backs, I stayed. I searched across territories for a healer willing to treat him for a fraction of the cost.

When his Pack's funds were poured into the Corlis Prime project, leaving nothing for food, furs, or firewood, I paid for it all myself.

I fed him. Bathed him. Held him through the nights when pain drove him half-mad.

I did everything to see him stand again.

"I will never forget what you've done, Lylah. I will be the first to protect you. If anyone dares harm you, I will erase them."

I met his gaze now.

"Rowan, you once promised you would wipe clean anyone who wronged me."

"I did," he said without hesitation. "And I always will."

"But today you were the one who brought them here." My voice trembled despite my control. "You invited them into your Pack. Into our home. Close enough to hurt me again. I want to collect that promise now."

He hesitated.

“I don’t want Cora here.” I lifted my chin. “If I asked you to cast her out of your Pack.. would you do it?”

Something dark and conflicted twisted in his ocean-blue eyes.

A sharp gasp cut through the tension. And we both turned.

Cora stood in the doorway, holding a basket of fruits, tears streaking down her face.

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Chapter 7

Lylah’s POV

Finish

The basket slipped from Cora’s hands and struck the floor. She dropped to her knees at once, scrambling to gather them, her voice tremble.

“I-i didn’t mean to interrupt your time together.” She bowed her head. “I’m truly sorry, Alpha Rowan, Lylah.”

Rowan was beside her in an instant, helping her to her feet. “What are you doing here?”

Rain clung to Cora’s form, her hair damp, her thin dress darkened at the hem. She looked fragile, like something delicate that had wandered into a storm it couldn’t survive. A pearl, easily cracked.

“What happened to Lylah was my fault,” she said softly. “I came to apologize. But I didn’t realize you were in the middle of a conversation. Please continue, I’ll return tomorrow.”

Rowan exhaled, the tension easing from his shoulders.

“It’s pouring outside, you’ll fall ill if you leave now. Stay the night.” His gaze flicked to me. “Besides, Lylah is glad you came.”

Cora’s face brightened, “Really?”

I said nothing. I felt like a ghost bound to the walls of the room.

“I’ll have your room prepared and dinner made,” Rowan said, taking the basket. “You two can talk.”

“Thank you, Alpha Rowan,” Cora replied, her voice sweet with gratitude.

Then he was gone.

The moment the door closed, Cora stepped closer. Her honey-brown eyes brimmed with tears, her lips trembling as though she were on the verge of breaking.

“I really didn’t know Sir Hector used your text for my speech, Lylah. You’re my beloved sister. I would never hurt you on purpose.”

“Beloved sister,” I said flatly. “Yet you didn’t recognize my writing.”

Beloved. The words tasted bitter.

We had barely shared a life. The moment she appeared, everything I had—my place, my warmth, my worth—was handed to her. I was set aside like a stray no longer needed.

“I—I didn’t really know how your writing looked,” she whispered.

“Then we aren’t close enough for you to call me your sister.”

Cora’s eyes widened, fear flashing through them, so practiced it almost felt instinctive.

4:12 pm M

Chapter 7

Finist

For fifteen years I had lived in comfort within Ironcrest Pack, while Cora—their true daughter—was raised in poverty by an Omega family. When the truth surfaced, guilt crushed me. I cried. I begged for forgiveness, apologized to a man who wasn't even my father as they dragged me away.

Cora had never been cruel. She had smiled then and said we could still be sisters.

Later, when I was exiled to Blackfang Pack and needed help more than I ever had, Alpha Eldric and Lun Daia severed all contact with me. So I reached for Cora, my last hope.

I sent letters, messages, and pleas. She received every one of them and did nothing.

They still piled at the Ironcrest borders, unread, unanswered.

"Lylah," she sobbed now, clutching my hand. "I know you hate me. You have every right. I deserve it. I'm useless, I'm not talented like you. Everything that went wrong is my fault." Her grip tightened as she pressed my palm toward her face. "If it will ease your pain... hit me."

The same plea.

The same broken performance she always used when things turned against her.

Once her tears had made me feel like the villain, now they made my stomach churn.

Were these the same tears she had shed before Eldric and Rowan? The same ones that won her the spot as Lunar Grace—my spot?

She lifted my hand higher. "Please. I deserve it. Hit me!"

I would have stopped her before. I always had.

This time, I stayed still.

Cora slammed my hand against her own face. Hard enough that the crack echoed through the room. Red bloomed across her cheek immediately, blood gathering at the corner of her mouth.

Even she froze, shock flickering across her features.

“Cora!”

Rowan burst back into the room, his aura flaring as he pulled her into his arms.

He wiped the blood from her lip, panic etched into his voice, “What happened?”

Then he turned on me, eyes blazing. “I can’t believe you hit her. This wasn’t her fault!”

“I didn’t. She lifted my hand and did it herself.” I shrugged.

“It’s fine, Alpha Rowan,” Cora whispered quickly, gripping his sleeve, fear darting through her eyes as though she were afraid I might speak again. “I deserved it.”

She forced a weak smile and tugged him toward the door. “Didn’t you say you were preparing dinner? Let me help you.”

213

1:12 pm M

The Betrayed Princess Rising

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To Communicate Better Novel

To Communicate Better Novel 8 –

Finishe

An hour had crawled by since they said they were preparing dinner, and now my patience snapped. My leg throbbed in protest as I pushed myself upright.

Ignoring the sharp pull of pain, I limped toward the stairs. If they weren't going to finish the meal, I would do it myself.

Halfway down, a strange sensation washed over me.

Selestine recoiled violently inside me—nothing like the usual, this was primal. Wrong. My stomach lurched as nausea clawed its way up my throat, urging me to turn back.

“Easy, girl,” I murmured silently, “We’re just getting food. You’re hungry, that’s all.”

She didn't calm down.

The closer I got to the kitchen, the stronger the warning became—my wolf pressing against my ribs, hackles raised, instincts screaming.

I reached the doorway and froze.

“Lylah just got a bit emotional,” Rowan's voice drifted. “She didn't mean to drive you out of here. Just ignore what you heard earlier. Don't cry again, alright?”

He cupped Cora's face gently. She was sitting on the kitchen counter.

“Okay, Alpha,” Cora replied, her voice sweet and trembling. “But my cheek still stings. I think if you kiss it, it might fade.”

“Where do you want me to kiss?” Rowan smiled.

Her lashes fluttered. “Here. Where Lylah slapped me.”

He leaned in.

At first, it was just a brush of lips against her cheek. Then he didn't pull away. His mouth shifted until it

met hers.

Something inside me shattered.

My body locked in place, then began to tremble violently, I clamped a hand over my mouth as pain exploded through my chest. Selestine howled, the bond screaming in protest as if it were being torn apart thread by thread.

Dizzy, I stumbled forward.

“Lylah!” They sprang apart instantly.

Rowan was at my side in a heartbeat, arms reaching to steady me. I shoved him away with every ounce of

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Chapter 8

strength I had, revulsion burning through me.

“Don’t touch me.”

Finish

“Lylah, what are you doing down here?” Cora asked, wide-eyed and innocent. “Your leg is still hurt, let m bring the food to your room.”

They recovered far too quickly.

Rowan’s expression shifted into concern, while Cora’s cheeks were flushed, her lips swollen, yet she played her part flawlessly.

I didn’t answer.

I turned and made my way to the dining table.

“Let me serve you,” Rowan said quickly. “I’ll prepare everything so you don’t have to move.”

I slapped his hand away.

“No need.”

Disgust curdled in my stomach.

All this time, how long had he been doing this? Slipping between us so effortlessly?

Playing the devoted partner while touching another woman behind my back?

“Lylah,” Rowan asked carefully, “is everything alright?”

I nodded without looking at him and sat down.

The honey-glazed ham tasted like ash, but I forced myself to swallow. Rowan and Cora took their seats as if nothing had happened.

“Alpha Rowan, Lylah, thank you once again for allowing me to stay the night,” Cora said softly.

“No need for courtesies. He’s pleased you’re here.” I replied flatly, my gaze fixed on my plate.

Rowan stiffened. He cleared his throat.

“You should rest immediately after this, the guest room is ready,” he said to Cora, his tone suddenly distant. “Your brother will pick you up in the morning.”

Her smile faltered, but she nodded obediently.

After dinner, Rowan moved to lift me into his arms.

“I can walk.” I ignored his outstretched hands and climbed the stairs myself, pain screaming through my leg with every step.

Once inside my room, I reached for my phone on the nightstand and found three missed calls from

Riven.

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Chapter 8

Finis

After a moment’s hesitation. I called him back.

“Sir Riven, I’m sorry. I went downstairs to eat.”

“Downstairs?” His voice snapped taut through the line. “You took the stairs in your condition?”

“My... condition?” I frowned. “You know about it?”

There was a brief pause.

“I have a contact in Blackfang Pack,” he said finally. “I told him to alert me if anything happens to you. I’m sorry about your injury. I’ll send two of the best nurses tomorrow to tend to you and assist with your da

routines.”

“What? No!” I blurted out. “There’s no need. I’m fine.”

“Then I’ll arrange for a healer from Lunar Grace-”

“Please, Sir Riven,” I interrupted, my voice firm. “I don’t need any of that. Truly.”

“Are you sure Lylah?”

“Yes. It’s barely a scratch.”

There was silence.

Then, he chuckled softly. “You’re indeed a stubborn little wolf.”

I smiled despite myself.

But unease stirred beneath it.

How could he afford such things? Nurses, Lunar Grace healers whose fees were known to cost a fortune? He was only a warrior—a part-time tutor. None of it added up.

Suddenly,

“Lylah!”

I jumped.

Rowan stood beside my bed, a small vial in his hands.

“Since when were you here?” I asked sharply.

“I brought your medicine,” he said. “You didn’t answer when I knocked.” His gaze dropped to my phone, sharp and assessing. “Who were you talking to?”

“No one,” I replied, my thumb already pressing the screen dark. “Just a friend from my part-time job.”

But the way his eyes lingered told me he had seen the name on the screen.

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To Communicate Better Novel 9 – Writers Society

Lylah’s POV

“Really? Show it to me,” Rowan demanded.

Finished

I exhaled slowly and placed the phone back on the nightstand, lifting my eyes to meet his stare. “No.”

A low growl vibrated in his chest. “That wasn’t your friend, was it? Are you hiding something from me?”

The irony almost made me laugh.

After

everything he had concealed, after the lies, the betrayal, the way he had played me like a fool what right did he have to demand honesty now?

“Get out,” I said calmly. “I’m tired. I want to sleep. Tomorrow I’m meeting Tiara at the Pack’s Central District.” I gestured to the table. “You can leave my medicine there.”

Rowan obeyed, setting the vial down. But he didn’t leave.

“Why do you want to go?” he asked.

I turned to him. “You’re not planning to restrict my right to see my friend, are you?”

“I’m just worried about your injury.”

“It will heal faster if I can breathe,” I replied. “I’ll feel better if I’m not trapped in this room. I need fresh

air.”

For a moment, his Alpha aura flared—dominance pressing against my skin, instinct testing instinct. Then it receded.

“Then I’ll take you myself,” he said.

I nodded and turned toward my bed. I didn’t look back at him, didn’t offer a word, not even the soft good night I had always given first. Rowan left the room, and the moment the door closed behind him, the suffocating weight in the air finally lifted.

Morning arrived on a wash of soft pink light spilling across the estate grounds. I bathed and dressed myself, surprised to find that my legs were less stiff, the ache dulled to a manageable throb.

Downstairs, voices drifted from the living room. Cora stood with Rowan, her brother Orion beside her.

“I told Cora it wasn’t her fault,” Orion was saying. “She doesn’t owe Lylah an apology. But she’s so

stubborn.”

“Orion, enough,” Cora said gently, patting his arm. “I’m worried about Lylah after what happened. You should be too.”

Orion only grunted in response.

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Chapter 9

Finis

“Alpha Rowan,” he said instead, turning to him. “Thank you for hosting my sister, and for protecting her from Lylah’s anger.”

Sister.

He used to call me that too.

He had been just a little boy when I was dragged from Ironcrest Pack. Now he was grown, his face tightening in open disgust whenever my name crossed his tongue.

“Lylah! You’re awake!” Cora’s voice lit up the room.

All three of them turned toward me.

Rowan stepped forward instinctively, his hand lifting as if to steady me—then stopping himself.

“Lylah, if you heard what Orion said, please ignore him,” Cora rushed out, hands clasped before her chest. “He speaks without thinking sometimes.”

“Cora, stop,” Orion snarled, yanking her into his side. “You’re too kind to someone who stole your life— someone who wallowed in luxury without shame while you, my true sister, lived in poverty! If anyone should be begging for forgiveness, it’s her!” Orion stabbed a finger in my direction.

“Enough,” Rowan said sharply, authority cracking through the air. “Orion, you may leave.”

Orion stiffened, then nodded.

“Goodbye, Alpha Rowan.” His eyes flicked to me—cold, contemptuous. He said nothing.

Cora waved. “See you later!”

I watched them go without reaction. I'd learned long ago how to endure being looked at like a mistake.

Rowan followed me outside. I stayed silent as he helped me into the car and drove. He tried to fill the quiet with questions and trivial conversation, but I answered in fragments, letting the silence stretch between us.

When we arrived, Tiara was already waiting.

"When are you done?" Rowan asked. "I'll pick you up later."

"No need," I said, closing the door before he could respond. "I'll get home myself."

Tiara studied me as I approached, her smile faltering just slightly.

"Alpha Rowan didn't escort you out? Didn't even hover or fuss over you?" She raised a brow. "That's new. But I like this version of you, less caged every day."

I smiled faintly.

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Chapter 9

"Let's eat first," I said. "I'm starving."

Finish

The pack's central district unfolded in a sweep of elegant stone and glass, its streets flanked by boutique: and eateries, jewelers and clothiers catering to every rank.

Tiara dug in her heels and steered me toward the nearest restaurant, refusing to let me take another step

The moment we sat down, her questions came rushing in.

"Alright," she said, grabbing my hand. "Tell me everything. Why do you feel like a completely different person today? And your leg—what actually happened? Does it have anything to do with Alpha?"

I hesitated.

But I remember only a week remained before I would sever myself from this pack, and Tiara was my friend. She deserved to know the truth, Rowan's betrayal, and every wound that could never be undone.

So I began, telling her from the very beginning, every painful detail.

When I finished, Tiara slowly pulled her hand away.

She slammed her fist against the table.

'He cheated on you? With Cora?!' Fury laced her words, sharp enough to bare fangs. "He gave her your place at the Academy, let her steal your speech like it was his right?"

'Yes.'

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(1)

1

Sara Lili is a daring romance writer who turns icy landscapes into scenes of fiery passion. She loves crafting hot love stories while embracing the chill of Iceland's breathtaking cold.

The Blackfang Pack's Central Hall thrummed with anticipation. Members from every rank filled the tiered seats, shoulders squared, eyes bright. Today, they had not come for the ceremony or obligation. They had come for her.

Lady Coraline Moonrow.

Once her name had been announced as the speaker, attendance had swelled beyond expectation. Cora- prodigy of Ironcrest Pack, daughter of Alpha Eldric-was a name that carried admiration and envy alike

In the elevated velvet seats reserved for alphas and their families sat Alpha Eldric and Luna Daia, with their son Orion at their side. Beside them, was Alpha Rowan of Blackfang himself.

“Thank you for granting my daughter this honor, Alpha Rowan.” Eldric said smoothly, inclining his head “This is her first time addressing such a vast audience. Please be understanding if nerves get the better of her.”

“Her first time? I was told Cora delivered speeches regularly at Ironcrest College.” Rowan’s brow creased.

The Ironcrest delegation had spoken often of Cora’s talent.

They had even dared to compare her to Lylah.

Eldric cleared his throat too quickly. “I meant her first time before representatives of other packs!”

Rowan studied him for a heartbeat, then nodded once. “My pack already admires Cora for who she is. She’ll be received warmly.”

Moments later, Cora stepped onto the stage.

She wore a white, flowing silk that caught the torchlight like moonlight on snow. A contrast that made the flush in her cheeks more apparent. When her gaze found Rowan among the crowd, she smiled.

Cora turned her attention to the pack and began.

At the first word, the hall stilled.

Then her voice found its rhythm, words flowing as her hands moved with effortless grace.

The pack answered instinctively. Murmurs of approval swelled and rolled through the hall, followed by applause.

“My daughter is indeed remarkable,” Eldric said, pride thick in his voice.

“Go, Cora!” Orion called, his cheer cutting through the hall.

Around Rowan, wolves leaned toward one another.

“They chose well,” someone whispered. “She was made for this.”

Another scoffed under their breath. “No. Her hands are shaking and her voice is too quiet. Lylah is much

better.”

“Exactly. As good as Cora is, Lylah has experience. I don’t understand why they’re replacing her.”

A pause.

Then, quieter–uneasy. “Doesn’t the script sound familiar? I swear this is the one Lylah wrote.”

Rowan listened without turning his head.

His expression remained calm, but inwardly he acknowledged the truth: when Lylah stepped on stage, even Cora paled in comparison.

The realization tugged a smile from him before he could stop it.

“Careful, Alpha,” His Beta, Gavriel, murmured at his side, amused. “Don’t let anyone catch you smiling at your future Luna like a lovestruck pup.”

“I am not.”

“Please,” Gavriel said. “You and Lady Cora are a perfect match. When do you intend to mark her? I’d advise sooner rather than later before Lylah causes trouble again.”

The words scraped against Rowan’s thoughts.

Just yesterday, he had asked Gavriel for help installing Corlis Prime, the pack’s most advanced intelligence software, onto Lylah’s phone.

Gavriel had been furious.

“That shameless girl,” he’d snarled. “After everything you’ve given her, she still dares to play you behind your back? Just cast her out, Alpha, and she’ll be forgotten. Not even her own blood will remember her.”

Rowan didn’t realize the speech had ended until the hall erupted in applause.

He rose with the others and followed them backstage.

Cora spotted him instantly.

She ran to him without hesitation. Rowan caught her easily.

“You were incredible,” he said, smoothing her blonde locks.

“Really?” Her eyes shone, searching his face.

“Yes. Look around. They’re praising you.”

And they were—but all eyes lingered on the way Rowan held her.

Anyone watching would never guess another woman still stood in his shadow.

“Lady Cora!” A cluster of Blackfang College’s top students surged forward, excitement bright on their faces. Each had earned their place at Lunar Grace. “Your speech was amazing!”

“Thank you,” Cora said, smiling as Rowan’s arm settled possessively at her waist.

One student hesitated, brows drawn tight with suspicion. “May I ask you something?”

“O—of course.” Cora’s smile faltered.

“Why did you use someone else’s work? Are you unable to write your own?”

The room stilled.

“What do you mean?” Someone demanded.

“The original author and I share the same mentor,” the student continued. “Mr. Stone was so impressed by the work that he submitted the opening to the Pack’s publisher and broadcasting council for distribution. The script was written by Lylah Moonrow.”

Gasps tore through the group.

“D—distributed?” Cora whispered, her hands beginning to tremble in earnest.

“You didn’t hear?” the student asked. “Mentors do that for true geniuses. But everyone claims you’re the genius of Ironcrest Pack’s College. Or was that just... exaggerated?”

The words struck Cora like lightning.

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For three days, Rowan remained at the manor.

He lavished me with care each day. I tried to send him away with minor pack matters, but he handled every task swiftly and still found time to return to my side.

By the time the fourth day dawned—the day I was meant to leave—panic had taken hold.

My thoughts clawed at one another, searching for a way to push him out without drawing suspicion. I was still trapped in that spiraling unease when Gavriel and Rosella arrived just before lunch.

We ate together beneath the manor's vaulted ceiling, porcelain plates and polished silverware reflecting the false warmth they wore so convincingly. I kept my expression cool, my emotions tightly leashed as I

ate.

"Lylah," Gavriel began lightly, swirling his wine, "you've truly outdone yourself. Convincing an Alpha to disappear from his office for days?" He chuckled. "The entire tower is buzzing. They thought he'd vanished."

"I didn't ask him to stay," I said calmly.

Rosella's smile widened, syrupy and sharp. "Don't be modest. Alpha Rowan wished to spend time with you. Surely you sensed that?"

My stomach twisted. They loathed me, but before Rowan, every claw was perfectly sheathed.

"That's it," Gavriel said smoothly, "We actually came to request your help, Lylah."

I met his gaze. "What kind of help?"

“We need Alpha Rowan at the Corlis Prime Accord Gathering tomorrow. Every Alpha investor will be present, and his absence would speak louder than his presence.”

“The alliance is already secured,” Rowan replied coolly, “Tomorrow is a formality. Don’t turn it into a spectacle in front of Lylah.”

I knew these events. Corlis Prime project inaugurations were never simple formalities; they were lavish pack gatherings of feasting and calculated conversation, consuming a full day before spilling into the night.

“I think you should attend,” I said.

Tomorrow evening, I will be gone. I couldn’t afford complications.

Gavriel straightened slightly, hope flickering behind his eyes.

“You are the face of Corlis Prime,” I continued, keeping my tone neutral. “It would be seen as disrespectful

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if you weren’t present.”

Rowan turned fully toward me.

The air shifted, his Alpha aura pressing closer. “Is that truly what you want, Lylah?”

Both Gavriel and Rosella held their breath.

... Fine,” Rowan said at last. “If you ask it of me, I’ll attend.”

Gavriel beamed, instantly donning his grateful mask. “Thank you, Lylah. Truly. I don’t know what we would’ve done without you.”

I didn’t respond.

This pack was full of wolves dressed in silk and smiles, fangs hidden until your back was turned.

Still, relief washed over me. Soon, I would be free of this place.

Rowan left before dawn the next morning. After securing my luggage, I went to my mentor's office to collect the final documents.

"This is your Junior Assistant application," Mr. Stone said, handing me the folder. "The official copy has already been approved and stamped. You'll receive it once you arrive at Lunar Grace."

"Thank you so much, Mr. Stone."

His eyes softened. "Take care of yourself, Lylah. I hope the path ahead gives you everything you've work for."

As my mentor at Blackfang College, he had borne witness to every sleepless night and every trial I endured to earn my place in Medical and Healing—only for it to be taken from me in the end.

"I will never forget you," I said honestly.

And froze.

I moved on instinct, tucking the documents behind my back.

Lylah." Rowan stood there, smiling.

"Rowan?" My heart stumbled in my chest.

"Did I startle you?" he said lightly. "I came to pick you up

He looked every bit the Alpha—his charcoal tuxedo hugging his broad frame, the pack sigil gleaming faintly like a warning over his heart.

Rowan extended his hand. "Come. The Alpha investors want to meet you."

"You were one of the few who stood with me when I built Corlis Prime from nothing," he said, his voice firm yet gentle. "So today, I want you beside me before every investor's eyes, Lylah."

Before I could step back, his arm slid around my waist. My wolf stirred uneasily beneath my skin.

"I promise it won't take long," he murmured. "We'll be finished before dusk."

He guided me toward his sleek black car, already opening the door. “And don’t worry about proper attire,” he added, a knowing glint in his eyes. “I’ve already taken care of everything.”

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