Barren Luna 351

Chapter 351

Talia's POV

"I'm sorry," Dalila muttered. "She wanted to know, and I thought..."

She broke off as Camilla kept glaring at her. Hattie stood, put a hand on Dalila's shoulder, and led her toward the kitchens, leaving me alone with the old woman and a half-filled plate.

"Please don't be upset with her," I said. "I am the one who asked."

"I'm not angry with her, but she needs to learn to control her emotions," Camilla said with a sigh. "She means well. She loved them too, the ones we lost. Dalila mourns by getting angry."

"Then, was she overreacting?" I asked. "Did Morgana really kill..."

"What she told you is true," Camilla said, cutting me off. "I won't waste your time pretending or talking about the ugly details of the past. I'm leaving with you at dawn because this needs to be finished."

"You don't have to be the one to do this, Camilla," I said. "You don't owe Morgana your life on top of everything she's already taken from you."

"Do you think I am so easy to kill?" Camilla asked.

"No, I just meant someone else could do this. You don't have to carry this alone," I replied.

"I owe something to everyone she's hurt, because I didn't see what she was becoming until it was too late. I trained the hand that's now reaching for your throat. So it's my job to stop her," Camilla said.

For a moment, her face tightened, and she looked away. "If I had paid closer attention, maybe none of this would have happened," she added, her voice weighed down by guilt.

She checked if the plate was still warm. "This is getting cold. Your mate needs to eat, and so do you. Go back to him. We have a long journey tomorrow. There will be time to talk then."

I nodded and left, knowing that forcing a conversation with her would not happen tonight.

When I got back to the infirmary, I told Nolan what had happened as we ate, explaining what Dalila had told me and that Camilla wouldn't change her mind.

"Good," he said, when I finished.

"What do you mean by good? None of this is good."

"It's not good what happened to her. But it's good she's coming with us." He put his fork down. "A witch that strong, who wants Morgana dead? I'd rather have her with us than against us."

"She's not doing it for us."

"No, but she's on our side, and that's better than her being against us. You'd do the same. In fact, you did when you killed Jason. You should understand how she feels," Nolan said.

"It is different, though. Morgana was practically kin to her," I argued.

"It is still a deep betrayal," Nolan said.

I imagined Camilla on a battlefield, her calm focused on the girl she had raised. I knew she would go through with it.

"It's really happening," I said. "The war."

"It is." Nolan reached for me, and I lay down next to his uninjured side, resting my head on his shoulder. "For both the wolves and the coven, Morgana has to go. There's no way we can all live peacefully with her still out there. Either we end this, or she ends us."

"I know." After she joined the Rogue King and helped Jason hurt me and my father, there was no going back. Morgana would never stop. If we didn't end her, she'd keep hunting us until nothing was left. First Morgana, then the Rogue King.

“I talked to Walden and Marco while you were getting dinner,” Nolan said after a few minutes. "They know the plan and will keep Bloodmoon safe while we're away."

"And Della?"

"Della wanted to come." He gave a short laugh. "I told her no, and I need you to back me up, because she'll try to convince you next."

"Why not? She's my Beta. She can fight."

"It's not about whether she can fight. It's about who keeps everyone safe at home if this takes longer than we expect. If we take all our strong wolves to Silverfang and the rogues attack behind us, Walden will be in trouble. He needs both Marco and Della," Nolan said.

"She is going to hate us for a week," I sighed.

"She can hate us from a safe and well-defended Bloodmoon."

In the morning, the whole coven came out to see us off. Hattie said no one could remember that ever happening before, especially not for wolves. They stood in the pale morning light at the edge of the trees. Nolan walked to the car on his own, slowly but without help. I knew it was hard for him, but I let him do it.

"Come back when this is over," Hattie said, taking both my hands. "You are the only wolves who have ever been welcome here, and I would like to keep it that way."

"We will. I promise."

"You had better." Dalila pulled me into a hard, brief hug. "Go kill her. And then send me a word, because I'm not going to sleep right until I know it's done."

I nodded and said, "We'll end, Morgana. You have my word."

Camilla turned at the edge of the trees and looked back at Hattie and Dalila. Her

long, steady gaze made them both stand a little straighter.

"Hold the coven," she commanded softly. "Guard each other. I will be back when it is finished."

The witches bowed, and we returned the gesture before slipping into the car. Leaving the shadows of the Lost Woods behind, we began our journey to Silverfang.

Chapter 352

Talia's POV

We reached Silverfang by evening and waited in my father's office, which now belonged to Solon. The room hadn't changed, but after everything, it felt completely different. I could almost picture my father there, surveying us with a quiet authority that had always made me feel safe. Being here without him made me miss him even more. I felt more like an outsider now than I ever did before.

"Never would I have thought I would be deep in the Alpha King's territory, let alone his office," Camilla commented, bringing me out of my thoughts as she removed the glamour on her to reveal her true form. Before we arrived, she decided to hide her appearance to avoid alarming anyone.

"There is nothing to fear. Solon is very reasonable," I reassured her.

Camilla smiled and said, "I do not fear, child. I just find the irony of the situation entertaining."

Solon came in with Leslie following close behind. They both froze when they noticed the third person with Nolan and me. Their eyes landed on Camilla, uneasy about her white robes and calm presence.

“Talia, please tell me I am not hallucinating. There is another person, a witch, in here with us right now," Solon stated as he defensively stepped in front of Leslie. No one expected to see a witch in Silverfang.

For generations, witches and wolves had mistrusted each other, with old wounds and stories of betrayal still alive in both our worlds.

"This is Headmistress Camilla,” I said quickly, hoping to alleviate the tension in the room before anything escalated. “She leads the witch coven. She is the one who taught me to control the Moonfire, and she's here to help us hunt Morgana."

Solon stayed cautious but nodded politely, showing the same respect our father always had, even to those he didn't trust yet.

"If my sister trusts you, you're welcome here. I'm Alpha King Solon. Thank you for helping my sister and her mate return safely. I heard you played a big part in that," Solon greeted.

Camilla looked at him for a moment, and then a small smile appeared on her lips. "Under these circumstances, you're more polite than I expected. I see some of your father in you,” she said. "Alpha King Rudolf had that same quiet strength. He always listened before he spoke or made a decision. A great trait in an Alpha and especially an Alpha King."

I stared at her in surprise. "You knew my father?"

"Yes," she confirmed.

"Why didn't you tell me?" I asked.

"There was nothing to tell. We were not that well acquainted. I knew of him as we only met a few times," Camilla explained. "Wolves and witches have been enemies for centuries, but your father was different. In every conflict I saw, he chose restraint when he could have pushed his advantage, and acted fairly when others wouldn't have. He never hunted us and made sure to punish those who did so unfairly. My coven remembered and always held him in high regard. I was saddened to hear of his death. There are fewer people like him left in the world than we can afford."

Solon's jaw tightened, and he said, "Thank you."

No one spoke. We were all grieving our father. Still, it was good to know he had made a positive impact among the witches, too.

Nolan let the silence linger for a moment before breaking it, just as he always did when sadness threatened to stop us.

"I'm sorry if I sound insensitive, but we have urgent matters to deal with," he said. "Morgana and the Rogue King have already started moving against us. We need to figure out a plan tonight. This can not wait any longer than it already has."

Solon turned to him. "What do you mean? You didn't tell me that."

"On my way to bring Talia back from the Lost Woods, mad rogues ambushed me. My guards were bitten and turned right in front of me. If Camilla hadn't intervened, I'd be dead or worse," Nolan stated. “And before you ask, this wasn't a coincidence. They knew I would be there. And with Jason dead, the only two people who would have known that are Morgana and the Rogue King."

Leslie's face had gone pale.

“Nolan, you have to stop being reckless,” she scolded. “I don't have the cure. If you'd been bitten, there was nothing we could have done for you."

Camilla turned to Leslie, her interest suddenly sharp. "You've been trying to make an antidote,” she said. It wasn't quite a question. "Who are you, child?"

"This is Healer Leslie," I said. "She's the best healer among the packs. She's Solon's mate, the Luna here, and she's been working on the mad rogue antidote."

"How far have you gotten with it?" Camilla asked her.

Leslie shook her head, defeat clear on her face. "I can only slow a minor infection if I catch it early. Reversing the full transformation? I haven't managed it. I've tried every cure I know, even made up a few, but the results are always the same. By all logic, it should work, but it never does."

"Is there anything you can do to help with the process?" I asked. Camilla's medicine had helped Nolan heal quickly, so perhaps she could work with Leslie to create the

cure.

Camilla was silent, then spoke quietly. "It will never work, not this way. You could spend months on this, and you still wouldn't be able to create a cure."

The room fell silent.

"Why?" I asked. "Why won't it ever work?"

"Because you're missing the one thing it needs," Camilla said. "The Rogue King's blood."

Chapter 353

Talia's POV

Leslie went from surprised to angry, remembering every failed batch and sleepless night that always ended the same way. Solon kept his face unreadable. Nolan stared at Camilla, just as stunned as the rest of us.

Now I understood why Jason had been so smug from the start. There was never a way to save my father without killing the Rogue King. Realizing this, I almost wished I hadn't killed him so quickly.

"Are you certain?" Solon asked.

"Yes," Camilla replied. "Morgana and I were close before her betrayal. This is all her doing."

"Why didn't you stop her when you had the chance?" Solon asked.

"I would have if I could," Camilla said with a sigh.

"None of this makes sense. Witches and wolves don't get along. How could she have gotten close enough to get the Rogue King's blood?" Leslie asked.

"Years ago, Morgana was training to become the leader of the coven. With her new position, she had access to all our resources. She used them in secret to study the dark arts. When I found out, I disciplined her and warned her again and again, thinking I could still save her," Camilla began.

"Clearly that wasn't the case," Leslie muttered. I shot her a glare.

"Don't scold her. She has every right to be upset," Camilla said. "You're right, Healer Leslie. Morgana kept going in secret, and when two of my sisters tried to expose her, she killed them. Normally, she would have been executed, but she had become too powerful. All we could do was banish her from the coven."

"That doesn't explain her relationship with the Rogue King," Leslie pressed.

"Be patient, child. I'm getting there," Camilla said. "Morgana came back with rogues who attacked anything that moved, friend or enemy. Anyone they bit went mad within an hour. We had no way to fight back. We lost sister after sister before we even knew what we were up against. In the end, we retreated into the Lost Woods and sealed ourselves away."

"Why didn't you inform Rudolf? There had to be a way to stop..."

"By the time we figured out what they were, the King was already dead, Alpha Nolan," Camilla cut in. "We were so weak then that we feared total destruction. Our only goal was survival. I won't apologize, but I am sorry for what happened to your father too."

Nolan gave a short nod. I could feel his turmoil through the mate bond, but he stayed silent.

"What did Morgana do to turn rogues mad? How did she use the blood?" Leslie asked.

"She used dark magic," Camilla explained. "We tried to find a cure in the early years, too, but we failed for the same reason you have. Once we discovered her collusion with the Rogue King, we realized the truth: he anchored the curse to his own lineage. Without the Rogue King's blood, there is no cure."

"Then the cure will have to wait," Nolan said. "We can't make it, so we'll stop wasting time. We'll put everything into the only thing that can end this. We find Morgana and the Rogue King and kill them both. If we cut off the blood at its source, the mad rogues will stop being created."

Before any of us could answer, screams came from outside.

The noise rose quickly from the courtyard. It started with one scream, then a dozen. Solon was the first to leave the office, and we followed him out into the Packhouse yard.

The yard was in chaos. Warriors had rushed out of the barracks and the gate, stopping in the same spot. Their heads were tilted back, weapons raised at something they didn't know how to fight. I looked up where they were staring.

A figure hovered in the air above the Packhouse, black robes billowing, floating as if standing on solid ground. She looked down at the warriors and their useless blades with a calm curiosity. I knew her right away. She was the figure under the tree at Colin's party, the one watching us at Moonbrook.

"Identify yourself," Solon called up, his voice carrying across the yard.

The woman looked at us and spoke casually. "After everything, you still don't know me. I'm hurt. I expected better of Rudolf's children."

Next to me, Camilla stood rigid, her face twisted with a rage so deep and old it must have built up over a lifetime.

My stomach dropped. Then I realized who she was.

Morgana.

She was here, inside Silverfang, above us. The wall did nothing to keep her out. That thought frightened me. What if she enchanted the mad rogues? Would she be able to get them through the wall?

'Calm yourself. Camilla is here. She will have a way to deal with her,' my wolf reassured me, but I could also hear the tremble in her voice. She was also worried about this new foe. Nolan stepped in front of me defensively.

"You wolves are so easily worked up," Morgana said as she floated down and landed as lightly as if she were stepping off a stair. She smiled at us like a host greeting late guests. "Allow me, since the children can't manage it," she said. "I am Morgana. The greatest witch who has ever lived, no matter what the old woman beside you wants you to believe."

"You are nothing of the kind," Camilla said, and her voice had gone cold as deep water.

Morgana's smile only widened. "It has been such a long time, Camilla. You look exactly the same. I always did admire that about you."

"Why are you here?" Camilla demanded. "Say what you came to say!"

Chapter 354

Talia's POV

"I'm here to deliver a message from the Rogue King," Morgana said. She smoothed her robe and barely looked at the armed warriors, acting like they were just fence posts. "Kargon is being merciful enough to offer you a chance."

"Stop wasting our time, witch, and tell us what you want," I snapped.

She looked at me, and all I saw in her eyes was amusement.

I watched her face, hoping for any sign she was bluffing, but her calm, unsettling smile never changed. Morgana looked like she could wait all night for us to give in. "So impatient," Morgana taunted. "Kargon is offering you the chance to kneel."

My wolf bristled inside me. Even thinking about kneeling to a rogue felt like an insult. "No," I growled. "No way in hell we would do that."

“Little girl, I wasn't speaking to you. You're just a little princess. The Alpha King makes decisions, or has that changed?"

I bit my tongue to keep from shouting back at her. "You watch your tone when speaking with my sister, witch," Solon warned. "Explain yourself or leave."

"Every pack in this territory is going to bow to the Rogue King, whether you like it or not. He's being merciful by allowing you a chance to think this through. If not, he will make an example out of Silverfang," Morgana explained. She turned her attention to Solon. "Swear yourself to him, little Alpha King, and you keep your throne and your people. Say no, and you lose both."

Solon stayed quiet. I could see him thinking, choosing his words carefully. The warriors glanced at each other; some shifted nervously, others gripped weapons that would be useless against magic. Even my wolf felt uneasy. 'Is he not going to say anything?' she asked. I was about to answer when Solon scoffed. Morgana raised an eyebrow. "What is funny, little Alpha King?"

"That you really think I would believe the word of a madman,” Solon replied. "The answer is no. Silverfang doesn't kneel to anyone. Tell him to take his mercy and shove it. I will burn Silverfang down to the ground myself before I willingly give it to him."

Silverfang warriors cheered in solidarity to Solon's response. Morgana laughed and shook her head. “You are far more interesting than Rudolf. Your defiance is refreshing, albeit idiotic."

Morgana's laughter got under my skin. I clenched my fists, wanting to shout back, but I knew that would only please her. Instead, I focused on Solon and drew strength from how steady he was.

"If that is all you have to say, run home to your master," Solon said.

Morgana's eye twitched, but she kept smiling. I could tell Solon had gotten to her. "That was just the first part of the message. He knew you wouldn't agree, so here's the rest: Kargon is coming for you. His rogues will come over your walls and tear through your warriors, your elders, your children. There will be nothing left of Silverfang when he's done. He'll make an example out of you. Are you sure you won't reconsider kneeling?"

Solon moved toward Morgana faster with his claws out. Just as he reached her, the smell of charred sage filled the air, and a cold shimmer rippled around Morgana. When I blinked, she was gone.

"I guess not," Morgana laughed, her laughter echoing for a moment before fading.

I looked at Camilla. Her face was pale, her lips tight, but her eyes were fierce. We all knew what was at stake now.

Solon stood in the space where Morgana had been, still seething with rage. "Get me the council now," he ordered. "Send word to every Alpha that we are at war. They need to first lock down their own territories and bring everything they've got to Silverfang. I want scouts out within the hour and the gates on full watch tonight. Nobody in or out without my warriors knowing why."

The courtyard emptied quickly as warriors rushed to their posts. The ones left behind moved with a quiet urgency, channeling their nerves into action. Solon didn't move right away. He stood rooted in place, his face unreadable, as if he needed one last moment to gather himself before facing what came next.

I realized I was gripping Nolan's hand tightly. He didn't pull away. Instead, he pulled me close and put his arm around me. I let myself lean on him for a moment.

"She could have killed us," I muttered.

“She is powerful, but she is not that powerful," Camilla stated.

"Morgana wanted us to be afraid. That was the purpose of this trip. They knew Solon would never agree to kneel, especially after what they had done,” Nolan said.

"She was able to bypass the wall. What if she could enchant the mad rogues to do the same?" I said.

"That would require a significant amount of time and energy that Morgana would not waste even for the Rogue King," Camilla said.

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Solon's jaw flexed. "Do not allow her to rattle you, Talia," he said, as he finally took eyes off the empty space where Morgana had disappeared to look at me. "How can you be so sure? We didn't expect her to show up like this," I argued.

“Because we're sure about you, Talia,” Nolan said. "You wield Moonfire. Moonfire will cut off her magic. Without it, she is just a regular woman. If she can't use her magic, she can't pass through the wall that way."

"He is right," Camilla stated. "She came here to frighten you, Talia, and she meant for you to spend the night frightened. Do not give her that. We know that they will attack Silverfang first, so let's plan for that."

Chapter 355

Talia's POV

Solon stormed into his office, nearly tearing the door from its hinges. His entrance sent a stack of reports tumbling, scattering documents across the table. He stopped at the desk, still tense, his jaw tensed like a wolf barely holding back a snarl.

He didn't hesitate. "Morgana made herself clear. The Rogue King is coming for us, and we need to prepare," he said, his voice hard. "I expect they'll be here before dawn."

Nolan's jaw tensed as he crossed his arms, his expression unreadable. Camilla stood by the wall, fists clenched. Derek seemed calm, but his eyes kept flicking between Solon and me before he said, "What would you have me do,my King?"

Solon fixed his gaze on Derek. "From now on, all Silverfang warriors will reinforce all entrances into Silverfang. No exceptions. You will organize our pack members through the tunnels and subchambers. No one comes above ground unless I give the order."

Derek nodded quickly. "Already anticipated. I've rerouted patrols and started the fallback plan for those that can't fight." He didn't look at any of us, just focused on Solon.

"Good." Solon eased up a bit. "Fangvale is neutral ground. We were surprised last time with Jason, and we can't let that happen again. Send scouts to check in every half hour. I want us ready if she tries to flank us via Fangvale."

"What if she's bluffing?" I asked.

"She's not," Camilla replied. "She meant every word."

"Alphas are already on the way. They are en route, and we will have them focused on the walls," Solon continued.

"Some of the Alphas won't come." Leslie spoke quietly from the edge of the table, arms wrapped around herself. The lamplight showed how much the past weeks had worn her down. "You know that, right?"

"The packs won't betray us, Leslie," I said. She looked scared, but as Luna, she needed to be strong.

"Kent spread rumors at the Harvest Gathering that Silverfang was getting weak," she continued. “Some packs will just look out for themselves. Now that Kargon has said he's coming for us first, some will lock their gates and wait to see who wins. We need to be ready for that."

"Let them."

She blinked. "What?"

"Let them," Solon repeated.

"I'm being serious," Leslie said.

"I am too. A pack wants to sit this out behind its own walls, that's their call, and I won't hold it against them after," Solon continued. "As long as they don't betray us or aid Kargon, I do not care. But if any Alpha turns on us, if any pack opens their doors to Morgana or sends word to the enemy, then they will answer for it. I won't forget, and neither will the others. They can stay home, take care of their own. I would rather know now who the traitors are than later."

I listened as my brother spoke, his voice calm and sure. In that moment, he didn't seem like the uncertain son with a title pushed upon him before he was ready. Solon truly sounded like the Alpha King of Silverfang. Our father would be proud.

"Your wall and warriors will not be enough," Camilla stated from her position near the window. "You insulted her tonight, Alpha King. She will not let that go."

"Then, what do we do to prepare for her?" I asked.

"You are what we need and fire,” Camilla replied simply. "Ordinary fire will keep the mad rogues off your wall, but it will not touch Morgana. Moonfire will burn her and any spell she casts. You will need to be prepared to do what must be done tonight, child."

Solon nodded and said, "Derek, we need torches, Molotovs, flame throwers, anything we can make quickly. We need them tonight."

"Done."

"When this begins, we keep it simple," Nolan added. "Divide and conquer."

"Agreed. Every Alpha answers to Nolan and me. We fight as one pack, not twenty separate ones," Solon said. "Talia and Camilla, your main goal is Morgana. If we take out Morgana, the mad rogues will fall. If she shows up, you focus on her. Don't worry about anything else. Just stop Morgana."

Everyone agreed except Leslie, who asked, "Then what about me? What do you need me to do?"

Solon looked at Leslie, and I recognized that look. Nolan had given me the same one before. Before I could say anything, Leslie spoke up again.

"I can run an aid station," Leslie said. "I can move with the warriors and treat bites as soon as they happen."

"What happens if you're bitten?" Solon asked.

"That won't happen. The warriors..."

"The warriors will be focused on fighting, not protecting you," Solon replied. "You'll go down into the tunnels with other members."

"No, Solon. I need to be out there helping," Leslie argued.

"No." His voice softened, which somehow felt worse. He hesitated, jaw tight as he searched for words. "I can't put you in danger, Leslie. I couldn't forgive myself if something happened to you."

"I am the Luna of this pack," Leslie countered.

"You're going down into the tunnels with the others. Keep everyone calm and help them rest. You haven't slept in weeks, and you're exhausted," Solon said.

"I should be out there with you, defending our pack as your Luna," Leslie insisted.

"I know you can," Solon said. "But you don't have to this time."

"Why? I am not fragile, Solon," Leslie snapped. "I can do more than hide down there. Just let me..."

"Leslie," Solon said firmly.

"No! I can't sit in the dark waiting to find out what will happen. I've watched so many turns, and I couldn't do anything. I can help now. I won't hide..."

She stopped suddenly.

Her face turned pale. She reached for the table's edge and missed. Her eyes rolled back, and she collapsed before any of us could catch her.

Chapter 356

Talia's POV

"Leslie!"

Solon moved before any of us could react. Leslie started to collapse, and suddenly he was carrying her out the door. We rushed after him, following through the halls and across the yard to the hospital.

They took her in right away. A nurse led Solon out of the room, gently but firmly holding his arm. The door shut behind them, and all we could do was wait in the hallway.

Solon wouldn't sit down. He stood in front of the door with his arms crossed, tense and bracing himself for bad news.

"Stop it, Solon," I said.

"Stop what?"

"You're expecting the worst. Leslie is just exhausted," I said. "She has been running herself into the ground for weeks. It's no more than that."

"You don't know that."

"No. But honestly, it's more likely than anything else. Isn't that right, Nolan?"

"Yes, she's right. Have faith in the Moon Goddess, Solon. Leslie has simply neglected her body. That's all there is to it," Nolan said.

Solon didn't say anything, but he seemed a bit less tense.

After a short wait, the doctor came out. I saw right away that she looked calm, even a little cheerful, which helped us relax before she said anything.

Before the doctor had a chance to close the door behind her, Solon asked, "What's wrong with her?"

"There's no need to worry, my King," the doctor assured him, her expression warm. "Luna Leslie is awake now. She's speaking normally and wants to see you. She does need to take it easy and get some real sleep, not just quick breaks here and there. But exhaustion wasn't the main reason she collapsed."

"Then, what was it?"

"Congratulations, my King." The doctor paused with a smile, leaving us all confused. "I'm happy to tell you that she's about three months pregnant."

For a moment, none of us moved.

"Three months..." Solon repeated, almost in disbelief.

"That's right. They're both doing well. You can go in," the doctor replied.

I broke into a grin as happiness washed over me. Nolan laughed shakily, and Solon paused just a moment before rushing to the door.

Leslie sat up in the hospital bed, looking pale but awake. As soon as she saw Solon, her face changed with emotion. He went straight to her and hugged her.

"You nearly gave me a heart attack," he whispered, holding her close.

"I know. I was scared too."

Nolan and I walked over to her bed. “Congratulations,” I said warmly. "To both of you."

Leslie's smile faded, and worry took its place. "This isn't good timing, and we all know it. Mad rogues will be upon us soon, and I can't be on the front lines. I can't even work near the fighting, not now. I'm out of commission just when you'll need every hand."

Solon cupped her cheeks gently. "Leslie, you've already given more to this pack than almost anyone. No one's keeping score. You deserve the rest that's coming. Go down to the tunnels, keep our people calm, watch over our pup, and hold this pack together. That's not running away. That's everything we need right now."

She was quiet for a moment. "You really believe that, or are you trying to pacify me?"

"Both. Mostly the first."

She let out a shaky little laugh. “Okay. I'll go with them, I promise." Suddenly, she grabbed his wrist, her eyes fierce. "But you have to come back. Don't you dare leave me alone with our pup. You gave me this, so you'd better come back and raise it with me. Swear it."

"I swear. I promise,” Solon said, with no hesitation at all. “I'm coming back." Someone knocked, and Derek poked his head in. When he saw Leslie sitting up, his face lit up. "I just heard. Congratulations to both of you. We haven't had good news like this in a long time." He turned to Solon, lowering his voice. "Sorry to interrupt, my King, but three of the Alphas are here. Henry's with them. They want to talk before the others arrive."

“Go," Leslie said. "Go, I'm fine. I'm going to sleep for a long time, apparently."

Solon kissed her once more and stood. I touched Nolan's arm. "Go with them. I'll stay with her for a while."

He nodded and left, so it was just me and Leslie in the room.

"It won't be like this for much longer," I said as I sat beside her. "After we handle Morgana and the Rogue King, you'll be able to bring your pup into a safer world."

"I keep dreaming about him," she said.

"Who do you mean? The Rogue King?" I asked, alarmed.

Had he really tried to scare Leslie just to get to Solon?

"No, it's Solon I keep seeing in my nightmares. He's always covered in blood, and I can't tell if it's his or someone else's. No matter what I do, I can't reach him." Her voice shook. "It doesn't feel like a normal

dream, Talia. It feels like a warning." Panic started creeping into me. Was Morgana trying to mess with Leslie's mind? I forced myself to stay calm, and my wolf agreed.

'Just like Solon said, she wants us to be afraid. Whether this is Morgana's doing or a warning from the Moon Goddess, we'll face it. Solon won't die. No, he can't,' my wolf said.

"It's not a prophecy," I said softly. "You're exhausted, stressed, and pregnant. Anyone would have strange dreams with all that going on. That's what's causing them, not something supernatural."

Leslie's hand found mine and gripped it hard. "Then promise me too. The same thing I made him promise. That he comes back. That you'll keep him safe out there."

I knew I shouldn't promise something like that. No one could. But seeing her three months pregnant and scared in that hospital bed, I would have promised her anything.

"I'll keep him safe," I said. "I promise."

Chapter 357

Nolan's POV

I walked down to the gate with Solon and Derek to meet the arriving Alphas.

Henry was the first to appear, crossing the yard at a brisk pace ahead of his warriors. He shook hands with Solon and then with me.

"Alpha King. Alpha Nolan. Beta Derek." He hardly paused, already looking behind us. "Where's Luna Talia?"

"She's alright. She's with Leslie right now, but she'll be here soon," Solon answered.

He didn't ease up. "I need to see her for myself. With everything going on, I just need to know she's okay."

I understood his worry. Though he had once been Jason's Beta, his kindness and loyalty toward Talia had earned my trust as well. Now, the way he looked after her felt almost like an older brother protecting his sister.

"She'll come down for dinner, don't worry," I assured him. “You'll see her then. I give you my word. She's just staying with Leslie to help with some work."

That seemed to ease the tension on his face little by little.

"Good. That's good." He placed a hand on my shoulder. "Thank you, Alpha Nolan."

After that, the Alphas arrived one by one with their warriors. Each one greeted Solon, shook his hand, and said the usual things people say when they show up for something they wish they could have avoided. Solon thanked them calmly, but I could see he was tired. Watching him, I realized our fathers made this look easier than it really is. By nightfall, Colin arrived.

Colin started to ask, but I cut him off. "She's okay, Colin. She's just busy right now. You'll see her at dinner."

He closed his mouth and then gave a short laugh. "Was that obvious?"

"You and Henry both have the same expression when you're worried about Talia," I answered.

Colin nodded and then turned serious as he faced Solon. “I brought a hundred of my best warriors, my King. They're at your disposal for as long as you need."

"Thank you," Solon replied, his voice composed, though I could tell it wasn't easy. "It means a lot that you would stand with us."

"You're practically family. I wasn't going to let you two deal with this on your own," Colin said.

Then, Solon raised his voice so everyone could hear. "Thank you, everyone, for coming. Before we talk, we'll eat. Follow me to the dining hall." He knew it was better not to send tired Alphas to their rooms hungry, especially with important business still ahead.

The dining hall was crowded and quiet, which was never a good sign. These people had fought rogues, lost friends, and led their packs through hard times; however, tonight even the strongest looked nervous.

'They're scared,' Solon said through the mind-link. 'They're afraid, and it's the kind of fear you see before a battle that feels impossible to win. Ordinary rogues don't worry them; they've fought those before. What really scares them is the Rogue King and the mad rogues.'

I stayed quiet because he was right. Leaders have to show courage so others can take strength from it, but at that table, there wasn't much courage left.

That's when Talia walked in and came over to me. One look from her told me Leslie was alright. She gave Solon a quick nod from across the table, and he nodded back before standing up.

“Luna Talia, are you..." one of the Alphas started, but Solon quickly cut him off.

“Let's eat first, shall we?" Solon said calmly. "The night is still young. We'll have plenty of time to discuss everything."

The servers brought out the food, and for a few minutes, the only sound was people eating. Then Landon, sitting a few seats away, put down his cup.

"Excuse me. Where's Luna Leslie tonight?" he asked. "I'd have thought she'd be at your side for this, my King."

I glared at Landon. Wasn't it obvious that Solon didn't want to talk about this yet? Talia gripped my knee and shook her head.

'Let Solon handle this,' she said through our link.

"She's unwell. She needs rest and will not be joining us tonight," Solon responded.

Landon nodded slowly. "And the antidote? She's been at it a long time. I think a lot of us were hoping she'd have something for us before this started. Half my warriors won't say it out loud, but it's the bite they're afraid of, not the dying."

Other Alphas followed Landon's lead and began asking questions.

"My healer can slow a turning if the victim is seen within the first 30 minutes of the bite," someone said. “But she can't stop it. Has Luna Leslie provided anything?"

"If there's a real cure, we need to know about it now," another Alpha insisted. "Not once we're already under attack."

I saw Solon's jaw tighten as the Alphas kept asking questions. He knew this talk had to happen sooner or later.

"There's no antidote," he said firmly, and everyone went silent.

The words hit hard. Across the table, I saw Colin's hands clench into fists, his jaw tight. One of the younger Alphas stared at his plate, eyes wide, as if the food had turned to dust. Even Henry, who was always confident, looked away for a moment, trying not to show his fear.

"Not one that works," Solon continued, "I won't insult you by pretending otherwise, not when I'm asking you to risk everything with me tomorrow. We don't have a cure."

"This is what you brought us here for?" an Alpha snapped. "You summoned every Alpha in the territory, and now you're telling us there's no cure for the mad rogue's toxin? You expect us to march out there and die?!"

Chapter 358

Nolan's POV

Talia glared at the Alpha, clearly offended, and I felt a low growl rumble in my throat.

"Mind your tongue," Solon warned, his voice icy and low. "You're a guest here. Accuse me again, and you'll regret it."

"Why shouldn't I? Where is this excellent healer everyone talks about? Luna Leslie is the best, or so we're told. Convenient she's missing tonight, of all nights. Maybe her ability is just a story. Maybe she's run off like the rest, too scared to face what's coming."

"Enough!" I was on my feet before I realized it. "You have no idea what Luna Leslie risked so your people could keep breathing. Say one more thing about her, and we'll settle it outside. Just you and me."

He fell silent, but the mood in the room had already shifted. Fear was spreading quickly.

"Leslie, your Queen of Silverfang, didn't fail anyone. The antidote can't be finished unless we have the Rogue King's blood. No cure was ever possible without it as I knew not long ago," Solon said.

"How? How is that possible?" an Alpha asked.

"Because I told them," Camilla stated. The Alphas turned toward her and visibly tensed at her presence. There were murmurs about why a witch was here.

"Mind your manners," Solon ordered. “Headmistress Camilla is here to help us against Morgana. She is the reason why Luna Talia will be able to face her. She is our ally."

"Until she turns on us," one of the Alphas yelled. "How can we trust her?"

"Because Morgana has harmed my people as well. We have a shared enemy now," Camilla responded.

The room grew quiet. I watched realization settle on each face as they understood what we were facing. One Alpha at the table even closed his eyes, as if he regretted coming.

'Cowards,' my wolf said, and there was contempt in it. 'They came this far to lose their nerve at a table.'

The murmurs started up again, quieter this time, but with more unease.

Solon finally stood with a sigh.

"Anyone who wants to leave can go. No shame in it. Return to your own packs and defend them."

Two Alphas immediately pushed back their chairs and rose.

“Go, then.” Talia's voice cut through the room, cold and steady, stopping them in their tracks.

"But make no mistake about what's waiting for you at home. Do you really think the Rogue King will spare you and your packs? You're fools if you think that is the case. Leave tonight, and you gain a few weeks, hiding behind your own walls. That's it. If Silverfang falls, nothing stands between him and your territory except the days it takes him to reach your gates. This isn't the safety you're choosing. It's just deciding when your turn comes"

'Our mate... spoken like a true Luna and Alpha Princess,' my wolf said, satisfied.

The two who had stood hesitated for a moment, then sat back down. They exchanged glances and looked at the floor before one finally spoke, his voice rough with regret.

"We crossed a line. That wasn't right. I apologize, my King. We'll stay."

Solon exhaled slowly and gave them a respectful nod.

"This is how it's going to work: When the battle begins, Nolan and I will lead. Every pack follows our orders. We act as one," Solon advised. "Luna Talia, and Headmistress Camilla have a single task: Morgana. No one interferes with that. The rest of us hold the field so they can reach her." He looked around the table, locking eyes with each Alpha. "We stay united, or we fall."

No one argued. After that, no one felt like eating, and the hall soon emptied.

Talia and I went back to our rooms, but neither of us could sleep. She lay against my chest, and I could feel her awake.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"Leslie has been dreaming of Solon covered in blood. She thinks it's a warning," Talia replied.

"It's exhaustion and a pregnancy and a war three days out," I said. "Anyone would be dreaming about blood right now. It doesn't mean anything."

"I know. I told her that, too." She was quiet for a long time. Then she shifted, sitting up to face me in the dark.

"Something else on your mind?" I asked.

"I need you to promise me something, Nolan. And I need you to mean it, not just say it to make me feel better."

"What is it?"

"If I get bitten and I turn." Her voice didn't waver, which made it all the more difficult

to hear. "You end it, right then. No waiting, no letting me become one of those things that could hurt the ones we're protecting. You have to do it. And if it's the other way around, I'll do the same for you."

Everything in me pulled back from it. "Talia."

"I'm not asking you to want to. I'm asking you to promise."

I thought of every excuse to refuse her, but they disappeared when I saw her eyes and realized she was serious. Her quiet determination reminded me of her father, who had shown the same composure when he made me promise him this. A quick death from someone who cared was a mercy.

"Nolan, I know it is a lot to promise, but we have to be realistic about this. We don't know how everything will turn out, and I want to make sure we are well prepared," Talia continued.

"Okay," I said at last. It was the hardest thing I'd ever agreed to. "If it comes to that, I promise. You have my word. And you'll do the same for me."

"I do the same for you," she said.

She lay back down beside me, and neither of us slept.

Chapter 359

Talia's POV

The horn tore me out of sleep.

My heart hammered in my chest as I scrambled fully awake, trying to process the chaos erupting around me.

'They're here,' my wolf growled within me.

Nolan woke up beside me at the same moment, and we didn't waste time talking. We got dressed, rushed out, and ran for the border while the horn still blared. Every Alpha and his warriors were up, ready to defend Silverfang.

'This is it,' Nolan said through our bond. 'We are going to finish this once and for all.'

When we reached the gate, Solon and Derek were already there. The wall was lined with heavy weapons, and the molotovs and flamethrowers the smiths made overnight were already in use. Warriors threw everything they had at the enemy, but it wasn't enough. There were just too many of them. I watched the gate shake as bodies pressed against it.

"Fall back!" Derek shouted, and the warriors pulled back, forming a line to stop the mad rogues from getting deeper into our land if the gate broke. For a moment, the line held. Then the gate burst open, and the rogues rushed in, climbing over their fallen to attack.

Solon's voice rang out through the link, hitting us all at once. His words reverberated in my mind, sharp and commanding. 'Everyone, guard your flanks and look out for each other. Whatever happens, don't let yourself be bitten. One bite and you're theirs. Then we'll have no choice but to put you down!'

Suddenly, Nolan grabbed me and kissed me hard, leaving me breathless. I felt his bloodlust, his anger, and underneath it all, his fear and worry.

“Why does this kiss feel like goodbye?” I asked, my voice shaking.

He shook his head. "No. It's a promise. I'll come back to you, Talia. Find me when it's over," he said.

He turned and threw himself into the fight, shifting as he ran. Nolan became a blur of dark fur as he hit the front line.

'Don't just stand there. We have work to do,' my wolf urged. 'Our mate will be fine. Now go.' I turned away from Nolan, searching for Camilla in the crowd.

Then I saw the dreadful figure enter our border and snarled without thinking.

I recognized him right away: The Rogue King Kargon.

He stood at the broken gate, not rushing in, moving like he owned the place. He was huge, taller than any wolf I'd seen, and the air around him felt wrong. It felt thick and cold, like being near a reanimated corpse. He looked over the destruction in my pack as if he enjoyed it.

'Let the Alphas handle him. Our responsibility is the witch,' my wolf scolded.

There was no time to think. Camilla was just a foot away, struggling with a mad rogue about to bite her neck. She couldn't turn fast enough. I rushed over, tackled the creature from the side, pulled it off her, and drove my dagger through its neck, killing it.

Still catching her breath, Camilla gave me a grateful nod. "Thank you, child."

"Don't thank me yet. We still have to find Morgana," I said.

We barely had time to breathe before another wave hit us. The battle was slipping out of control. I saw a Silverfang warrior get bitten on the shoulder. He kept fighting, but within seconds, his eyes turned red and his face changed. He turned and attacked his own companion.

'We can't keep going like this,' my wolf said. 'If we don't find her, we're going to lose everything.'

For every rogue we killed, two of our own joined their side. Finally, I understood what Leslie's dreams meant: this was a war that turned its own soldiers against each other.

The Alphas fought harder than I'd ever seen. Colin, Henry, and the others held lines that should have broken, but more rogues kept pouring in from behind Kargon.

Nolan's voice came through the mind link, strong and clear, cutting through the chaos. 'Forget the rogues for now. Every Alpha focuses on killing the Rogue King. He's the one keeping them together. If we take him down, they'll fall apart. Kill the Rogue King!'

I stayed close to Camilla, keeping myself between her and the chaos. I took down any rogues that got past the Alphas with my dagger, while Camilla burned them with her fire. I kept searching the chaos for the person I still hadn't found.

"She's nowhere to be seen," I spat. "She started all this and doesn't even have the courage to show her face."

'That's fine. We will hunt her down,' my wolf growled.

"She'll show. Not to join the battle, but for me. She's been waiting for the moment to finish what she started at the coven. She'll want me to see her triumph before she kills me," Camilla said, her tone steady and cold.

We stepped back to avoid a group of newly turned rogues, and through a gap in the fight, I saw it happen. Solon and Nolan attacked Kargon at the same time, one going for his legs, the other for his throat. In a flash, Kargon's head was cut off. But something about his death felt wrong.

A king that terrifying shouldn't have died like any other rogue.

'No, this was too easy. He barely even fought back. Something is wrong,' my wolf warned.

She was right. The rogues didn't slow down or hesitate one bit. They didn't notice their king was gone; they kept fighting just as hard. Kargon's death hadn't changed anything.

"She's here!"

Camilla's shout made me look up.

Morgana floated above the battlefield, her robes trailing in the smoke as she smiled at the chaos. All around the field, by the trees, the wall, and the broken gate, other figures appeared. They were huge and gave off an unnatural cold.

Then a dozen Rogue Kings rose into the air. More appeared behind them. They all looked exactly the same.

None of these monsters should have existed.

I stood frozen, unable to make sense of what I was seeing.

Chapter 360

Talia's POV

"How can there be so many of him?" I asked in shock.

"There aren't," Camilla said, keeping her eyes on Morgana. "It's an illusion, like when she made you think Jason was Nolan. She's hidden the real Kargon among fakes to make us waste our strength searching."

Before Camilla finished, I reached out to Nolan through the mate bond. 'The Rogue King you killed wasn't real. The real Kargon is hidden among these fakes Morgana made. Hold the line until I deal with Morgana.'

Nolan answered right away. 'Understood.'

Then he called out to everyone: 'Stay together. Don't break formation to chase a Rogue King. Keep your distance. Use fire to keep them back. Stay close and move as one. Don't let yourself get cornered.'

"How do we get to her?" I asked Camilla. "We can't kill her while she's floating up there."

"Just get me close to her, child. I'll handle the rest," Camilla said.

I led the way toward Morgana, pushing through the chaos. I fought off any rogue who tried to stop us, while Camilla kept her eyes locked on Morgana. When we were close enough to shout, she placed a protective ring of fire around us before engaging Morgana.

"Morgana!" Camilla shouted. "Look at you, floating up there because you're too scared to face us on the ground. You disgraced the coven when you betrayed us, and you're still a disgrace now. Whatever you build from this, it's in the blood of your own sisters."

Morgana's smirk disappeared. "Sisters? Those pathetic wenches don't deserve to be affiliated with me. I gave them a chance, and they spat in my face."

"You killed them in cold blood. You're a coward," Camilla said.

"They were weak, not worth living anyway," Morgana said. “I'll finish what I started. I'll burn your pathetic coven to the ground and build something stronger from its ashes. A new order that isn't afraid of what real power takes. When I'm done, no one will even remember your name."

"Over my dead body!" Camilla hissed.

Morgana smirked and said, “So mote it be." She lifted her hand, and something dark shot out and wrapped around Camilla.

Camilla screamed and fell to one knee, shaking. She tried to fight whatever Morgana had done to her. For the first time, Camilla looked weak.

Fear twisted in my stomach. Camilla had always seemed unbreakable. Seeing her falter shook my confidence, and for a moment, I wondered if this was how it would end. Then anger took over, burning away my doubt. I wouldn't let Morgana win. I had to help.

I spotted a bow and arrows near a barrel of oil. I ran over, dipped the arrows in oil, lit one with Moonfire, and fired at Morgana again and again. She dodged the first few shots, but the heat forced her lower.

"What is this? Moonfire?! I killed the last wielder," Morgana snapped, twisting to dodge my shots.

"You were wrong," I growled.

Then an arrow hit her arm, and she fell. She slowed her fall but landed face down in the dirt. Camilla moved fast, now free, and raised both hands. Strands of light shot out and trapped Morgana where she lay.

"Now, Talia!" Camilla shouted. "Finish it!"

“Gladly!" I yelled as I shifted and ran. I slammed into Morgana, clawed and tore at her, then bit down hard on her waist. I dragged her across the dirt toward the fire cage, a ring of iron and flames built to hold a witch.

"Release me, you filthy beast!" Morgana screamed as she clawed at me, but it didn't help. I heard her muttering spells, but none worked as I forced moonfire into my mouth. I bit down harder, and she screamed in pain.

I dragged her inside and jumped clear before I let Moonfire loose. It spread over Morgana, and the fire cage held her until the Moonfire finished consuming her. Her screams rose and then finally stopped.

As soon as Morgana died, the fake Kargons disappeared, leaving the real one by the broken gate. He looked surprised, but his smug smirk stayed. Kargon still thought he could win, and he was a fool for it.

'That's the real Rogue King! Kill him!' I shouted through the mind link as I ran back into the fight.

'I got him,' Nolan said through our bond. 'Stay back.'

'We will do this together. I'll distract him and give you the opening you need,' I told him. 'Just keep the rogues back.'

Kargon tried to run, but this time there was no illusion left to hide behind. I cut him off with a snarl.

"You have been a thorn in my side for too long, princess. You will die tonight," he growled as he tried to shift.

Nolan crept up behind him to stop the shift, but just then, a mad rogue lunged at Nolan, its jaws inches from sinking into his neck. Solon grabbed the rogue by the throat and slammed it into the ground.

Kargon turned toward the commotion, and I lunged while he was distracted.

“I don't think so,” he said as he swung at me, but I dodged left, tore open his side, and knocked him off balance. Nolan took the opportunity. With one clean strike, he took the king's head off. This time, Kargon's body didn't disappear but crumbled to the ground.

Across the field, the mad rogues staggered, their drive gone, and started attacking each other. Our warriors quickly began dispatching, as they were too uncoordinated to fight back.

Nolan stood over Kargon's body and howled in triumph. The other Alphas joined him, their victory howls echoing across the battlefield.

My wolf stood beside him, breathing heavily, finally feeling a sense of relief.

Then someone screamed nearby, and I turned.

Solon pressed his hand to his wrist, blood seeping through his fingers. A dead rogue lay at his feet with Solon's flesh in his teeth. Solon looked up at me, and his eyes were already turning red at the edges.

'No! No! This can't be happening!' I roared.