

The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 281

3rd Person's POV

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78

+5 Pearls

By the time Lylah reached the penthouse, night had already settled deep over Lunaris, draping the city in quiet shadows. She didn't pause or linger. She moved with quiet purpose, crossing the space and retreating to her room, where she began packing for her visit to the Moonclaw estate the next day.

Clothes. Essentials. Small things.

Her movements were precise, but distant-her mind elsewhere.

So much so that she didn't notice the Alpha who followed her inside.

Ezra remained a few steps behind, silent as a sentinel. The air around him felt wrong tonight-colder, heavier. But it wasn't dominance.

It was fear.

He watched her as she packed-every fold of fabric, every quiet motion-and something twisted violently in his chest.

His wolf stirred.

A sharp, instinctive panic clawed through him.

"Lylah..." His voice came out rougher than he intended. "Are you angry with me?"

The question hung between them.

Lylah didn't look up.

"No, Ezra," she said softly. "Why would I be?"

She meant it. But her voice was too light, too distracted. Her attention had already shifted to her wrist.

There had been three bracelets yesterday.

Now, there were only two.

A small frown creased Lylah's brow.

She moved quickly, pulling open a drawer and retrieving the velvet jewelry box tucked inside. The brown rosewood bracelet lay within, its star-shaped diamond pendant catching the light-

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...

the one she had meant to give Ezra.

But hers...

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The red one, with a crescent moon charm that had once rested against her skin, was gone.

Lylah straightened slowly, confusion settling in.

Behind her, Ezra watched everything.

But he didn't notice the bracelet-nor her confusion. He saw only distance in every movement she made. His thoughts fractured, instincts surging wildly.

He knew she was upset.

And the thought of losing her-

It struck something primal.

Without warning, he moved.

Ezra crossed the space in a heartbeat and pulled her into his arms. Tightly. Desperately.

"I made a mistake," he said, the words breaking free before he could stop them. "I won't defend myself. You have every right to be angry with me. But please..." His grip tightened, almost shaking.

“Don’t leave. Not like this. If someone has to go, I’ll be the one. I’ll disappear. I’ll stay gone until you forgive me, I swear it.”

His voice fractured-raw and unsteady.

“I can even call him here... if that’s what you need. Just-please don’t walk away from me.”

Lylah frowned, caught off guard.

They pulled apart slightly.

For a moment, she simply stared at him.

Her confusion lingered-but now recognition surfaced beneath it.

Ezra was shaking.

Not with anger, but with something far more unsettling.

Fear.

“Ezra...” she said slowly, her voice softer now, searching. “I don’t understand. What are you

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talking about? Who is ‘he’?”

Ezra’s gaze locked onto hers.

The usual steel was gone-stripped clean.

What remained was something bare. Vulnerable. Almost fragile.

Like moonlight trembling over dark water.

“Rowan Blackfang.”

The name settled between them like a shadow.

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+5 Pearls

“If his presence makes you calmer... happier...” Ezra continued quietly, “Then I’ll call him. I will. Just... don’t think about leaving me.”

Lylah’s eyes moved slowly over his face, reading what the words had left behind-the rigid set of his jaw, the emotion he was trying so hard to conceal, the look of a wolf who had said more than he intended and was now bracing for what came next.

“You’re terrified,” she said, her voice lowering. “And you’re saying things that don’t make sense. This has something to do with Rowan, doesn’t it?”

Her eyes narrowed slightly.

“Something that happened the night I dropped Tiara at the hotel.”

Because that was the night.

She was certain of it now.

That was when the air around Ezra had changed-when he returned carrying something invisible and heavy, something that clung to him the way fear does when it has just been earned.

“Tell me what happened.”

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The Betrayed Princess Rising

Ruby Walker

Ruby Walker is a rising voice in the world of romance and spicy fiction. With a gift for weaving deep emotions, sizzling chemistry, and unexpected twists, her stories are a blend of passion and drama that captivate readers from start to finish. Ruby’s writing style is bold and irresistible—perfect for those who crave intense, addictive love stories.

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Ezra's voice broke the silence, rough and unsteady in a way Lylah had never heard before.

"He called me," he said. "He told me he had something that belonged to you. That bracelet."

The words seemed to drag against his throat, as if each one cost him something. "He said you were the one who gave it to him. I didn't believe him. Of course I didn't."

But Lylah felt it.

Not through his words, but through the subtle shift in the air, through the restless stir of her wolf beneath her skin. The truth flickered there, sharp as lightning across a blackened sky.

He had believed it.

Even if only for a moment.

Even if he hated himself for it.

Rowan had gotten to him.

Lylah's jaw tightened, a low, dangerous heat coiling in her chest.

"Why didn't you tell me?" she demanded, her voice sharpening. "That parasite dared to call you? To provoke you? I would've dealt with him myself."

And she meant it.

That night at the treatment center flashed through her mind-how easily she could have gone further, how much restraint she had shown Rowan. Now, it felt like a mistake.

"Ezra," she continued, stepping closer, her voice firm. "I didn't give that bracelet to him. Why would I? It was never his to have."

She reached for the velvet box, flipping it open with swift precision before taking his hand and guiding his fingers inside.

"You feel this," she said, her tone insistent. "This is the other one. Yours. A matching pair."

The words hung heavy between them.

"The one Rowan has-the one he told you about-was mine. And I was going to give you this one." Her breath caught slightly, frustration bleeding through. "I don't know how it ended up

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his hands.”

Then, suddenly, it clicked.

That night.

The confrontation.

The blow she had landed across Rowan’s bruised face twice.

Her expression shifted, realization settling in.

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+5 Pearls

“...I must’ve dropped it,” she murmured. A quiet exhale followed. “But whatever, I’m not going anywhere near him just to take it back. I’ll replace it.”

Before the words had fully settled, Ezra moved. He reached into his pocket and withdrew something small, placing it into her palm.

Her bracelet.

For a moment, Lylah could only stare at it.

Stunned.

“How did you...”

“After his call, I had my guard take me to him,” Ezra said, his voice steadier now, edged with something far darker. “How he got it didn’t matter. Gift or not, I was taking it back.”

His jaw locked, tension rippling through him like a restrained snarl.

“Why would I let another male keep something that belongs to my Luna?”

The word carried weight.

Possession. Claim. Devotion.

All wrapped into one.

“I don’t allow that.”

A soft sound escaped Lylah-half breath, half disbelief.

“Oh...”

She hadn’t expected that.

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Hadn’t expected him to go that far.

Gently, he lifted her wrist, his large hand engulfing hers with a care that felt almost reverent. The bracelet clicked softly into place, resting once more against her skin.

And with it, something shifted inside her.

Warmth unfurled through her chest-slow, deep, and aching in a way she couldn’t quite name.

“We really do hate that Blackfang plague, don’t we?” Lylah said lightly, a small laugh slipping through, though her eyes remained soft. “So why suggest calling him earlier, Ezra? Inviting him here?”

Ezra held her gaze, a quiet and resolute expression settling into his face.

“I do despise him,” he said. “That hasn’t changed. But does that outweigh my need to keep you with me? To make you happy? No.”

His voice lowered.

“The moment you walked in, I knew something was wrong. You were distant... suddenly packing, avoiding me.” His jaw tightened. “I thought you were leaving me. And when wouldn’t say anything-I didn’t know what to do.”

His voice dropped, quieter now, stripped of everything but truth.

“I would’ve done anything... if it meant you’d stay.”

Lylah’s chest tightened.

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Before he could say anything more, she lifted her hand and pressed a finger gently against his lips.

“Ssh.”

Her eyes softened, though a hint of amusement flickered through them.

“Stop talking.” A faint smile tugged at her mouth.

“You’re silly big wolf. I’m not leaving you. We’re leaving together for Moonclaw tomorrow.” A small tilt of her head. “I already told you that, remember?”

Realization broke across his face in a sudden, overwhelming wave.

Relief followed just as swiftly, loosening every rigid line of his features, unraveling the tension that had held him so tightly wound. The shift in him was immediate, and it stirred something uneasy in Lylah’s chest.

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Even someone like him could be shaken...

Could be afraid.

Could stand before her, stripped of everything but raw, unguarded vulnerability.

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The Betrayed Princess Rising

Ruby Walker

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3rd Person's POV

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+5 Pearls

“When you went to Rowan, did he attack you?” Lylah asked, her gaze already sweeping over Ezra’s body, searching. “Are you hurt?”

She knew what Ezra was. Knew the kind of power that lived quietly in him—the kind that made other Alphas recalibrate the moment he entered a room. Rowan was no real threat to him. And yet, something primal stirred within her, a protective instinct she couldn’t suppress.

“No.” Ezra’s lips curved faintly. “Don’t you already know? That night at the hotel, we laid ourselves bare to each other. You’ve seen.”

She opened her mouth, then closed it.

Just moments ago, he had been gutting her with his sadness, and now those same eyes held a glint that could only be described as deliberate.

“Or,” he added, his voice dipping lower, “was it too dark for you? If you’d like a better look now, I can show you.”

His fingers were already at his shirt, unfastening the buttons with ease.

Lylah’s eyes widened, heat flickering unexpectedly through her chest.

She caught his hands before he could go further. “No no.”

But it was already too late. The sharp lines of his chest were exposed, muscle shifting beneath his skin, and she swallowed, her pulse quickening despite herself.

“No need, Ezra,” she said quickly. “I believe you.”

A glint lingered in his eyes before it softened.

His hand rose, brushing gently against her cheek.

“I’m sorry about Nyx. I should have told you sooner that I had found her, that I had brought her to Moonclaw.” His jaw tightened slightly. “But in the end, I couldn’t keep her alive.”

His thumb stilled against her skin.

“I was afraid to tell you. Afraid you’d be disappointed. Sad. Angry. All of it.”

Lylah’s chest eased, something heavy loosening within her.

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So she had been right.

Not silence out of indifference, but silence born of fear.

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“Don’t apologize,” she said softly. “I should be thanking you. For finding my friend, for bringing her somewhere safe, and for showing her kindness in her final days.” Her gaze steadied on his. “I’m not disappointed. I’m not angry. I’m grateful. Do you hear me? Grateful.”

Something shifted in Ezra’s expression-relief, raw and unguarded, long held at bay.

His other hand rose to cradle her face, both palms curved gently against her cheeks. Slowly, he leaned down and pressed his forehead to hers.

Silence settled between them, soft and weightless as falling snow.

It was late into the night when Rowan’s guards brought him the news. Lylah had made contact -not with him directly, but through one of his guards.

A warning.

If Rowan so much as messed with Ezra again, she would come to him personally.

And she would be his nightmare.

She would break him until he regretted the very moment their paths had ever crossed.

The instant the message reached him, Rowan became something else entirely. Bottles shattered under his hands. The air thickened with the sharp scent of alcohol and Alpha fury, his wolf surging too close to the surface. One of his guards lay bloodied, caught in the wake of his rage -too slow to escape.

In the end, they had no choice but to call Cora.

She arrived at ruin.

“Rowan!” Her voice cut through the tension as she rushed forward.

His face was flushed, his breathing uneven, blood trailing once more from his injured nose. His eyes were unfocused, burning with something feral beneath the haze of alcohol.

Her gaze snapped toward the remaining Blackfang guards, fury blazing. “What are you all doing? Are you his guards, or just brainless mutts waiting to be given orders? Useless. Everyone of you.”

With Azrel’s help, she pulled Rowan upright, steadying his weight as they dragged him toward

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the car.

The engine roared to life, and they were gone.

Only then did the tension snap.

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+5 Pearls

The guards shifted uneasily, anger simmering now where fear had been.

“She hasn’t even been crowned Luna and already her mouth runs wild.” One of them muttered. “Calling us mutts, all while clinging to our Alpha like a bitch in heat all this time. Without a mark, without a claim to his name.”

“Alpha Rowan keeps her close because she’s still useful,” the second voice said coldly. “But when the time comes she’ll find herself reduced to something even a whore would look down on.”

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 284

Cora's POV

Finished

Whatever touched Blackfang's reputation would touch mine. That was simply the arithmetic of becoming Luna-the pack's image and my own were already beginning to fuse at the edges, whether the crown sat on my head yet or not.

So when Rowan returned from the business venture barely able to stand, reeking of wine and something dangerously close to despair, the fury that moved through me was cold and immediate.

I had spent months clearing the path beneath his feet, smoothing every stone, removing every obstacle with my connections. And he dared come home like this.

"It's hot," he slurred, leaning his weight into me as I steered him toward his chamber.

"Sit down," I said briskly, already working the buttons of his velvet coat. "I'll help you take it off."

Then his hand found my wrist.

"You're so beautiful." His voice was thick, dragged low by the wine, his gaze heavy-lidded and unfocused in a way that made me study his face. "Come here."

"Rowan—"

He pulled me down before I could finish.

My back met the silk sheets. The rest followed too quickly-his hands impatient, his movements carrying none of the ceremony or care that a mate deserved. There was no question asked. No pause.

But I had counted the nights since Rowan last touched me, and the number had grown humiliating. My wolf had been restless with the wanting of it-that bone-deep, mating-bond hunger that no amount of pride could entirely silence. So I said nothing. I let the night take the shape it was taking.

It was rough. Rowan had never been gentle. But tonight there was something else beneath it. Something almost punishing in the way he moved, and the pain bled past the pleasure until there was very little left of the latter. My claws tore clean through the satin sheets. A deep soreness settled into my hips.

“Lylah, my little moon.” The word left him on a breathless exhale, low and reverent and completely devastating. “You’re so beautiful tonight. You said you’d be my nightmare. My ruin.” A sound that was almost a laugh, broken at the edges. “Good. I’d walk into it willingly.”

Everything in me went very still.

“Rowan.” My voice came out strange. I pressed my hands flat against his chest. “I’m not Lylah. Look at me. I’m not her!”

“Shhh.” He didn’t stop. “Lylah. I know you missed this too.” His forehead dropped, his voice dissolving into something broken and private, something I was never meant to hear. “I haven’t slept in so many nights without you by my side. But tonight, I think I finally can.”

When it was over, I didn’t sleep.

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Finished

Not a single hour of it.

I lay still while the dark shifted slowly toward dawn, my eyes fixed on the ceiling. Bruises bloomed across my skin, scattered like a constellation of red stars across pale canvas.

The one small comfort I had carried into that room-the threadbare hope that tonight, at least, he had wanted me-was gone.

He had not seen me at all.

He had seen her.

That stray my parents had raised and discarded and could not, it seemed, stop haunting the spaces she had vacated.

Rowan stirred as the morning light crept beneath the curtains. He turned, took in the sight of me, and I watched the sequence of it move across his face. “Cora?”

“Moon above. What did I-” He stopped, dragging a hand down his face. “I’m sorry. I don’t remember. We need to get you to a healer.”

I smiled. It didn't reach anything deeper than my mouth.

"Goddess." He was already moving, already putting distance between himself and what he'd done, the guilt rolling off him in waves I could scent even through the haze of last night's wine. "I'm so sorry. I shouldn't have done that. Not to my future Luna. I'm sorry, Cora."

Future Luna.

At least he still acknowledged it. Though his fire burned elsewhere—for her, for that wretched stray who had stolen fifteen years that should have been mine.

But love had never been the point. It was a fragile, useless thing, easily misplaced, easily given.

Power was not.

The crown was the point.

And in the pale light of morning, Rowan had confirmed the only thing that mattered.

It was still mine.

For now, it was enough.

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 285

3rd Person's POV

Finished

The last time Lylah had come to Moonclaw, the land had breathed in the soft green haze of late spring. Now it burned in the amber glow of autumn.

The towering trees stood brittle and bare, their leaves long since torn away by the wind, which howled colder than she remembered-sharp enough to sting her skin when she leaned her head out of the car window on the winding road toward the estate.

She was glad for the choice she made before leaving-thick sweaters for both herself and Ezra, their colors matching, their threads shaped into symbols she stitched by hand. Marks that mirrored the charm bracelets at their wrists.

“Ezra,” she murmured, her breath fogging faintly in the chill, “do you think the snow will reach your Pack this year? Moonclaw sits at the heart of Verdanth; sometimes, winter barely touches it.”

Ezra’s gaze lingered on the distant tree line, his senses stretching far beyond what hers could grasp. “I’m not sure. The past three years, winter never brought snow, just endless cold air. But when it did snow...” His voice softened, reverence threading through it. “It eased something in the land.”

“I can imagine.” A quiet smile curved Lylah’s lips, though it carried a trace of something wistful. “Your Pack has always been beautiful. I knew winter here would feel like something out of a dream.”

Memory pulled her under before she could resist.

“In Ironcrest, winter lasted longer,” she added, “I used to hate being trapped at home. Orion would drag me out anyway-we’d play in the snow, build figures, even sneak into the training grounds and play with whatever the warriors left behind...” A soft breath escaped her, half a laugh, half a sigh.

Her smile faltered.

“I should have stopped him,” she said more quietly. “I was the older sister.”

Because every time Orion insisted, every time she gave in, they would return home to consequences she alone would bear.

Eldric’s wrath had been merciless-punishment delivered with cold fury for daring to expose his precious heir to the winter air. Blows. Slaps. He never listened. Never cared that it had been Orion’s wish.

Daia would watch in silence. The servants, too. Only her grandmother ever dared step forward.

Gentle old hands tending bruises, pressing warm cups into Lylah’s trembling fingers, offering any comfort

she could.

“You don’t need to.” Ezra’s voice cut through her memories. “Winter isn’t something to fear It’s meant to be lived in, even enjoyed. You weren’t wrong.”

The quiet conviction in his tone wrapped around her more securely than the wool at her skin.

Before long, the car slowed, and Moonclaw Estate rose before them.

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Finished

As they stepped through the grand entrance, someone slipped gracefully from inside.

Zyrelle.

She wore a violet velvet dress that clung like dusk to her form, her dark hair swept high, exposing the elegant line of her throat.

“I thought you wouldn’t return here again,” she teased.

“Is Vargan inside?” Ezra asked, his tone clipped.

“He is. But for now, I think you shouldn’t see him yet.” Her gaze flicked briefly to Lylah. “The lesser blood has returned for the marking of the new moon. They’re all circling Grandfather right now.”

‘Lesser blood’ was Zyrelle’s chosen name for their distant kin-wolves of Moonclaw with only the faintest trace of Alpha lineage, yet they strutted as though dominance ran pure and unquestioned in their veins.

Ezra’s expression darkened, and something predatory flickered beneath his eyes. He had never hidden his distaste for them-not after his parents’ deaths, when those same relatives had revealed their true nature like scavengers circling a fallen alpha.

“Why should that stop me?” he asked.

Zyrelle leaned in, her lips brushing close to Ezra’s ear, her voice dropping to a velvet-soft warning.

“Because you’ve kept your mating hidden from them, Ezra.” A faint, knowing smile touched her lips. “None of them takes kindly to being excluded. They wouldn’t dare bark at you, of course, but they’ll need someone to sink their teeth into. You know who they’ll take it out on.” Her gaze slid to Lylah. “Your Luna.”

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 286

3rd Person's POV

Finished

“But tell me, has she truly learned what it means to be a Luna?” Zyrelle asked, her voice smooth but edged with quiet severity. “You’ve both been away from Moonclaw all this time. I’m only wondering how she’ll fare when their tongues start wagging. You know how vicious they can be.”

Her words were not soft, but they were honest.

Ezra didn’t hesitate at all. There was no retreat in him, no instinct to yield-not to them, not to anyone. His wolf stirred beneath his skin, restless, possessive. His mate stood beside him. His Luna. And that placed her far above the scavengers waiting inside.

Perhaps Lylah would feel the weight of it all later. Perhaps confusion would come.

But he would not shield her from her place. Not when the moment demanded it.

“They’ve likely already heard about my mating,” he said, his tone hardening. “If I walk in alone, they’ll start sniffing for answers. It’s inevitable.”

His eyes darkened, something feral glinting beneath the surface. “So I won’t delay it. They’ll meet their Luna today.”

Without another word, he guided Lylah forward, his hand firm at the small of her back.

She followed, steady despite the tension coiling in her chest, her fingers curling lightly around his arm as if anchoring herself to him.

Inside, the air shifted.

The scent of wolves thickened the moment they crossed the threshold. Layers of musk, dominance, and rivalry press in like an unseen storm. Voices overlapped in a chaotic hum, all directed toward one figure at the center.

Vargan.

The old lord of Moonclaw sat surrounded, enduring the swarm with visible disinterest, his expression carved from stone save for the faintest flicker of irritation in his eyes.

“My eldest son studied in Lunaris, Master Vargan,” one man was saying, his chest puffed with pride. “And he’s mated to a noble lady from Blackridge Pack. Accept him into your line, and you strengthen Moonclaw’s alliances tenfold.”

A scoff cut through the air. “Your son couldn’t lead a hunting party, let alone a pack. He lacks both instinct and strategy.” Another voice rose, sharper, more aggressive. “My son, Kalith, has been training the warriors in Ezra’s absence. He knows Moonclaw better than anyone now.”

“Your lineage is diluted,” a third voice interjected coldly. “Too far removed from the Alpha blood to matter.”

The words clashed-each one laced with ambition, greed, and barely concealed hostility.

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Finished

And then it settled.

Understanding struck Lylah like a blade sliding between her ribs. This wasn’t idle boasting. They were vying for the Alpha seat.

Ezra’s seat.

Her grip on his arm tightened without thought, her pulse quickening as something fierce surged through her veins. Heat bloomed beneath her skin, sharp and electric.

Ezra noticed instantly.

“Don’t listen to them,” he murmured, low enough for only her to hear. “None of it matters to me.”

But Lylah’s gaze remained fixed on the gathering, her expression hardening as the truth fully settled in. “But it matters to me.”

She turned her head slightly to him.

“You’re not just their Alpha,” she continued, steel threading through every word. “You’re their blood, Ezra. Their family. Instead of standing beside you, they’re already thinking of replacing you?”

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 287

Lylah’s POV

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I wanted to hold on to the anger. It burned hot and righteous in my chest, sharp enough to steady me. I needed it, needed something solid to brace against the way they spoke about Ezra, as if he were nothing more than a position waiting to be filled.

But no matter how tightly I clung to it, something inside me began to unravel.

The fire dimmed. Folded in on itself. And in its place came something softer.

Sadness.

It swept through me in a slow, crushing wave, stealing the air from my lungs. A deep, aching throb pulsed through my chest, as though an invisible thread had been hooked into my very being and pulled taut. My breath faltered.

Was this... our mate bond?

“That’s not how family should speak of each other, Ezra,” I said quietly, “What makes them treat you like this?”

I knew this pain-the kind that came not from enemies, but from those meant to stand beside you.

And I wouldn’t let my mate carry it alone.

A smile touched his lips, caught me off guard.

“I don’t see anything funny,” I muttered, nudging his arm.

His smile deepened, softer now, almost fond.

“Hearing you being so protective of me... It makes me happy. But truly, you don’t need to worry about it, my love.”

Before I could answer, a voice cut cleanly through the room.

“Lylah!”

Conversations stilled. Heads turned.

Vargan was already striding toward us, his sharp eyes bright with recognition. He took my hand without hesitation and turned to face the gathered wolves.

“You can all put an end to that meaningless discussion,” he announced, his voice carrying the unmistakable weight of authority. “Your Alpha and Luna have arrived.”

“Luna?” someone echoed.

An elder stepped forward, her gaze cold and measuring, devoid of warmth. It settled on me like a blade.

I met it head-on.

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Apr

Even as uncase coiled beneath my skin, I smiled.

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Finished

“So this is the Luna of Moonclaw,” she said slowly. “Alpha Ezra’s mate? I assumed it was nothing more than a

rumor.”

Another voice followed, smooth but edged. “She is indeed a beautiful lady. Fitting, perhaps. Though it is rather unfortunate.” His eyes flicked to Ezra. “Why were none of us informed of your mating ceremony?”

A third joined in, “When you choose a mate, Ezra, you are not only choosing for yourself-you are choosing a Luna for this entire pack. We are your elders. We had every right to witness it!”

“And which pack is she from?” someone else added, openly scrutinizing me. “I’ve never seen her before. She looks...” His gaze dragged over me, dismissive. “Fragile. Moonclaw is not a place for the delicate. Tell me, Luna, surely you are not with our Alpha simply because of his status?”

The temperature dropped.

I felt it before I saw it.

Ezra’s aura darkened, something ancient and predatory stirring beneath his skin. Ager flashing like bared fangs beneath the surface.

Without thinking, I slipped my hand into his.

Grounding him.

Anchoring him.

“I understand your concerns,” I said, forcing calm into my voice despite the tension tightening my chest. “But I assure you, I am not with Ezra for something so shallow.”

A sharp laugh cut through the moment.

“Funny how you all suddenly care now.”

Zyrelle stepped forward, her presence slicing through the crowd as she came to stand beside us. “And trying to meddle in Ezra’s affairs after all this time?”

“Suddenly?” one of the elders scoffed. “We are his family, Zyrelle. It is our responsibility to be concerned. Since his parents passed, it has been our duty to ensure what is best for him and for Moonclaw. We are bound by blood. He should at least respect us.”

“Family...” I echoed softly.

But there was nothing soft in my gaze.

I let it sweep over them-one by one-taking in the faces that claimed that word so easily.

“The only people Ezra has ever named to me as his own family...” I continued, my voice steady now, “...are Grandfather Vargan, Lady Zyrelle, and Beta Damon. They are the only ones I’ve seen stand beside him. The only ones who have ever reached out.”

My fingers tightened slightly around Ezra’s.

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“As for the rest of you...” My gaze hardened. “If your idea of concern is silence year after year, only to appear when it suits you to question him, to judge him, then tell me... what is that, if not a false pack dressed as family, poised to drive the blade into their own Alpha?”

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The Betrayed Princess Rising

Ruby Walker

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 288

3rd Person’s POV

Finished

Even if those so-called pack members harbored ambitions against their Alpha, they would have found subtler ways to act on them. Yet here they were, standing beneath Ezra’s roof, groveling before his grandfather, offering up their sons like bargaining chips... all while the true Alpha still lived and breathed.

Lylah’s voice cut through the room, calm but edged with quiet steel.

“That isn’t just pitiful,” she said. “It’s humiliating.”

The words landed harder than any shouted accusation.

At her side, Zyrelle’s lips curved, though she could no longer fully suppress the flicker of satisfaction in her eyes. She had expected many things from Lylah-hesitation, fragility, perhaps even fear.

But not this.

Not a Luna who stood her ground against wolves twice her age.

Across the room, one of the elders-Myranda-stiffened, her expression sharpening with clear displeasure.

“You would do well to watch your words, Luna,” she said coldly. “We have known Ezra far longer than you. It is not your place to lecture us.”

Before Lylah could respond, Vargan’s voice rose.

“Lylah speaks the truth.”

He stepped forward, his presence alone enough to still the restless tension in the room.

“She is Ezra’s mate,” he continued, “That alone grants her more right to speak on his behalf than any of you.” His gaze swept over them, unflinching. “And I do not recall a single day when any of you were truly present in his life. After my son and his mate died, I raised Ezra myself. Alone. Until he found her, his mate.”

A ripple of discomfort spread through the gathered elders.

“That was not entirely our fault, Master Vargan,” one of them countered, though his voice lacked its earlier confidence. “Ezra has always been so strict. Even as a pup, he kept others at a distance.”

A low, quiet shift of energy answered him.

“I learned early,” Ezra said, his voice smooth, almost conversational, “how to tell the difference between those who truly sought me and those who sought my crown.”

The temperature in the room seemed to drop.

“For some of you,” he continued, eyes glinting faintly, “it was never about me.”

Heavy silence followed.

Several of the elders looked away, their expressions tightening, shame burning red beneath their

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composure.

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Finished

Vargan was in complete agreement with his grandson, but as the eldest of the family, he also understood that his role was to stand as the mediator between them.

“You all came here for the New Moon celebration, right?” he said firmly. “Not to claw at my grandson’s crown like starving dogs.” His gaze hardened. “Let this end here. It would be disgraceful to taint a sacred night with greed.”

Reluctantly, the tension broke.

The elders withdrew, returning to their seats with forced composure.

Tea was poured, dishes passed, but the air remained thick, the unease lingering like the scent of a storm that had not yet fully passed.

By the time night fell, the estate had quieted.

The moon hung high, its pale light spilling through the windows like silvered mist.

Lylah stood in the room she and Ezra had been given-his old room. Her gaze settled on the long couch beneath the window, bathed in moonlight.

It hadn’t been there before.

“Ezra,” she called softly, her voice quieter now, threaded with curiosity. “I don’t remember that being here last time. Did you have it brought in?”

The bathroom door opened behind her.

Ezra stepped out, a dark silhouette against the dim light.

A bathrobe hung loosely over his frame, the fabric clinging just enough to hint at the powerful lines beneath. Damp strands of black hair fell across his forehead, shadows cutting sharper angles along his already chiseled features.

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 289

3rd Person's POV

Finished

"I mean that couch." Lylah clarified, her voice softer now, tinged with heat as her gaze lingered on the long piece of furniture by the window.

She had seen something like it before on one of those discreet adult storefronts. The memory alone was enough to send warmth rushing to her cheeks.

Ezra didn't even hesitate. "Yes. I bought it," he said plainly.

Her eyes widened, her wolf stirring restlessly beneath her skin. "But what for?"

He moved closer. His presence pressed in around her, his scent wrapping around her senses like smoke. Her wolf bristled, alert and reactive, caught between instinct and something far more dangerous. There was a naughty glint in his eyes now.

"They say..." he murmured into her ear, "that the night of the new moon is... the most auspicious time for intimacy. Most Moonclaw wolves still hold to this belief. It's called the mating night here."

Lylah's pulse faltered. Her breath caught as realization dawned.

"So that couch..." she began, barely above a whisper.

"Yes. For us." Ezra replied without shame, without restraint. "For variety," he added, his tone maddeningly casual, as if discussing something entirely ordinary. "We've only ever stayed within the confines of the bed. I considered taking you outdoors..." A faint, almost teasing note slipped into his voice. "But I know you wouldn't like that."

Lylah's face burned, heat spreading down her neck as her wolf shifted restlessly, caught between embarrassment and an unfamiliar, instinctive curiosity.

Ezra, meanwhile, looked entirely unaffected-calm, composed, as though this was the most natural conversation in the world.

Dinner that evening passed in a blur for Lylah.

Though she sat beside Ezra at the table with Vargan and Zyrelle, her thoughts kept drifting-unbidden- back to his words, to the couch bathed in moonlight, to the way his voice had lowered when he spoke of mating night.

Her wolf hadn't settled since.

The dinner tonight followed tradition-an exchange of gifts beneath the quiet reverence of the new moon. When it was her turn, Lylah presented Vargan with the gift she had prepared back in Lunaris: a warm hand-

knitted wool shawl.

"For you, Grandpa," she said softly.

Vargan accepted it with a rare gentleness, his hands brushing over the fabric with quiet appreciation.

"In return," he said, straightening slightly, "as the elder of this family, I have something for each of you. And

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one for Damon, when he arrives."

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Fintrohed

At his signal, the butler stepped forward, carrying a tray with three sealed envelopes.

One each for Lylah, Ezra, and Zyrelle.

"Thank you, Grandpa," Lylah said with a bright smile, her sincerity unmistakable.

Across the table, Zyrelle remained composed, but something flickered beneath the surface. For years, Vargan's blessings had been reserved for Ezra alone. This time, she had been included.

A childish envy she couldn't quite suppress arose.

Later that night, as the estate quieted under the watchful glow of the moon, Lylah's phone lit up with a call from Tiara.

"I still can't believe I couldn't come with you to Moonclaw," her friend complained the moment the video call connected, her voice bursting through the screen with familiar energy.

Lylah smiled, "You would've loved it here."

"Tell me everything," Tiara pressed. "You said the elders give gifts too? That's unheard of. In Blackfang, they expect diamonds from us and give nothing but half-hearted prayer in return." She snorted, laughing at her own remark.

"I don't know if it's all of Moonclaw or just Ezra's family," Lylah admitted.

"Well, open it already!" Tiara urged, practically bouncing through the screen. "And show me, Lylah. What if it's diamonds? Alpha Ezra's grandfather doesn't seem like the stingy type."

Lylah laughed softly. "Alright, alright..."

She propped her phone up, angling it so Tiara could see, then carefully broke the seal of the envelope.

Inside was a folded sheet of paper.

"I think it's just a letter..." she said, a small smile forming as she unfolded it.

But the moment her eyes scanned the content, her breath hitched.

It was a check.

And the number written across it-

Lylah's eyes widened in pure shock.

"Tiara look..." she whispered, then turned the phone toward the screen.

For a second, there was silence.

Then a scream erupted so loudly from Tiara's side.

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The Betrayed Princess Rising (Lylah And Rowan Blackfang's)

Chapter 290

3rd Person's POV

Finished

This was no trivial sum, no idle generosity meant to impress. The number inked across the check was staggering, the kind of wealth that could overturn a life in a single breath. Lylah could have purchased another estate in Lunaris outright with it.

The realization struck like lightning through her veins, leaving her utterly still.

“I told you,” Tiara’s voice rang triumphantly through the phone, bright and teasing. “You’re officially his favorite grandchild now!”

But Lylah barely heard her.

Her pulse stuttered as her fingers curled tighter around the paper. She could only stare, utterly stunned beneath the crushing weight of Vargan’s offering.

Far past midnight, Zyrelle finally opened her own gift. The amount did not disappoint. It never did.

And yet, satisfaction did little to quiet the prickle of curiosity curling beneath her skin.

‘How much had Lylah received?’

‘Was it the same... or something more?’

The question lingered, sharp and persistent.

She stood near the Moonclaw border when Damon finally arrived, the scent of distant territories clinging faintly to him-city smoke, steel, and something distinctly Lunaris.

“You’ve decided to grace us with your presence at last, Beta,” Zyrelle remarked, one brow lifting.

Damon inclined his head. “Lady Zyrelle. Sadly my duties delayed me. And I’ve missed the gift exchange.”

Her gaze sharpened slightly. “How do you know it’s already happened?”

“I...” Damon trailed off.

For a fleeting moment, the truth brushed against his thoughts-dim lights, the low hum of a Lunar is bar, and a female’s voice laced with pride as she boasted about her friend in Moonclaw receiving an outrageous sum from one of the elders. He hadn’t stayed long enough to see her face.

And he certainly wasn’t about to admit he’d been there.

He straightened slightly, composure slipping back into place with practiced ease. “When I was walking through the streets, I overheard people talking,” he said instead, his tone smooth, unbothered. “Word must’ve spread from those who’ve visited Moonclaw.”

Zyrelle studied him for a moment, then gave a small nod.

Of course it did.

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Finished

Lunar is wolves, in particular, had a habit of turning whispers into spectacle. Even the smallest matters could become grand tales under their tongues.

And this... this was no small matter.

As the night wore on, the thought refused to let go of its hold.

Ezra and his Luna lived in Lunar is now.

If the story had reached there...

A slow, deliberate smile curved along Zyrelle’s lips. An idea took root, curling through her mind with quiet intent. Without hesitation, Zyrelle reached for her phone and called her parents.

“Father. Mother.” Her voice carried lightly through the call, deceptively casual. “You haven’t sent anything for Ezra this year. And now my cousin has a mate. It would be improper not to send something for her as well.”

“Strange,” her mother replied, a note of amusement slipping through. “Since when do you concern yourself with sending gifts to Ezra? You used to sulk every time someone so much as favored him.”

Zyrelle let out a soft breath, a faint smile curving her lips: “Times change, mother,” she said lightly. “I’m not that petulant little pup anymore.”

Another silence-this one thoughtful.

“Send something,” she continued smoothly. “But deliver it to Grandfather. Let him present it to Ezra and Lylah tomorrow.”

The agreement came soon after.

When the call ended, Zyrelle leaned back, satisfaction settling warm in her chest.

Two gains, neatly secured.

First, Vargan and her parents would see her differently now-no longer the sulking pup who once bristled at Ezra receiving attention. And second... when Lylah inevitably shared the story with her friends, Zyrelle had little doubt her name would be woven into it.

The thought pleased her more than it should have.

There was no real malice in it, only a streak of mischief, playful and instinctive. A trait that had always lived in her, as natural as the wolf running through her veins, was shaped by her place as the younger cousin in a family.

That night, she slept with a faint smile playing on her lips.

Morning came draped in a pale wash of light over the estate, the air still carrying the quiet, lingering energy of the new moon. After breakfast, Lylah was summoned to Vargan’s study.

“There has been a development,” the old Lord of Moonclaw said slowly as she entered.

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Lylah stilled, attentive.

“Ezra’s uncle, Zyrelle’s parents, have sent a gift.”

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Vargan paused, as though the notion still puzzled him. “They do so every year. But this time, it is not meant for me.”

He gestured toward the item before him.

“It is for you, my dear.”

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