

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

Chapter 311

Cora's POV

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Finished

I hadn't realized how long she'd been standing there, but it hardly mattered. If anything, I was glad Lylah had heard everything: the praise from Professor Vale, the admiration in my friends' voices, the quiet envy they couldn't quite hide.

Let her see it all. Let her feel the difference between us.

Because every time I saw her, she was alone.

A lone wolf, they called it. Lone wolves were usually the ones no one chose. I called it what it was—pathetic.

"Lylah," I said, letting sweetness lace my voice as I turned toward her. "Why stand so far away? Come closer, if you're so interested in our conversation."

"Lylah, come here," Seraphina chimed, her tone bright but edged with mockery. She lifted my wrist deliberately, letting the bracelet catch the light like captured starlight. "Aren't you curious about Alpha Rowan's gift for Cora? It's exquisite. Not many males would go to such lengths... especially when the bond is already secured, right?"

Lylah didn't so much as glance at it.

"I'm not interested," she said flatly. "You're blocking the way."

The air shifted.

My wolf stirred, a low, restless growl curling beneath my skin. That indifference as though I were nothing, ignited something sharp and burning in my chest.

Who does she think she is?

“Why do you sound so bitter?” I murmured, stepping into her space, my voice honeyed but laced with something far less kind. “You just walked out of Professor Grimwood’s office, didn’t you?” I tilted my head, studying her face like something to be picked apart. “Did he finally say what everyone’s been thinking about your work?”

A soft laugh slipped from my lips, “Oh, don’t look like that. Those comments aren’t even official yet. Just preliminary impressions.”

She didn’t flinch.

“Not yet, perhaps,” she replied coolly. “Though I see someone is already celebrating.” Her gaze flicked to my bracelet, then back to me. “When reality catches up, I doubt I’ll be the one

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disappointed.”

For a fraction of a second, my wolf bristled.

Then she walked past me.

Just like that.

Behind me, a chuckle rippled through the corridor.

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“Why is she always so bitter like that?” Seraphina muttered. “I heard she has a mate already, maybe he didn’t even bother giving her anything for the New Moon?”

“Maybe,” another voice added. “Not after seeing how devoted Alpha Rowan is to Cora. Anyone would burn with jealousy.”

A smile curved at my lips, slow and satisfied.

Let her hear them. Let it sink in.

My phone rang before I could add anything else. The sound cut clean through the chatter, sharp enough to pull me away.

I turned, stepping aside as I answered.

“Yes, Father?” I said, unable to keep the edge from my voice. His calls never came without inconvenience.

“We’ve arrived in Lunaris,” he said. “I realized I didn’t arrange any proper accommodations yet. Can you find us a suitable estate?”

I frowned slightly. “Us?”

“Your family, of course. Your mother, your brother, and I.” His tone carried that familiar, expectant weight. “We’re here for the Lunaris Research Center. You know they’ve been scouting the most gifted wolves across Verdanth. Your brother has the mind for it, I’m certain he’ll be accepted. Once Orion graduates from Ironcrest College, he’ll step right in.”

My fingers tightened around the phone,

A strange, creeping cold slid through my chest, sinking deep into my bones.

“Cora?” my father pressed. “Did you hear me? It’s a simple request. Surely you can handle that.”

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The Betrayed Princess Rising

Ruby Walker

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The heavy expectation in Eldric's voice as he asked her for help struck like a whip, and Cora's wolf stirred, agitated beneath her skin. But it was the pride that followed-rich and unmistakable-as he spoke of his son, the heir of Ironcrest, that cut deeper.

He had never sounded like that when he spoke of her.

His daughter.

Cora's teeth clenched, her jaw tightening as something sharp and feral twisted in her chest.

"You're certain Orion will be accepted into the Lunar Research Center?" she asked, her tone deceptively calm. "They've turned Rowan away more than once, so have many of Lunar's most brilliant minds. And yet you're certain my brother who isn't even half as capable as my mate, will be accepted as one of their engineers?"

The silence on the other end lasted only a heartbeat before it shattered.

"What kind of sister are you," Eldric snarled, his voice cracking like thunder as the edge of his wolf bled through, "to speak of your own brother that way? Instead of standing with your blood, you bare your teeth at him. And don't you dare compare my son to Rowan."

The words coiled, venomous, in Cora's chest.

"Once Orion enters that field, he will build something greater than Corlis Prime. He will raise Ironcrest's name above even Blackfang in the tech world. Do you understand me?"

Jealousy flickered before it hardened into something colder.

Cora exhaled slowly, her wolf retreating into a watchful silence.

"Yes," she said.

It was easier that way.

“Our accommodations, Cora,” Eldric went on, as though nothing had passed between them. “Don’t forget. And arrange a proper welcome dinner for your brother. Invite Rowan as well. You will both attend tonight.”

Something in Cora snapped.

“I’m busy with my studies,” she said, the edge in her voice no longer concealed. “And Rowan has his own responsibilities. We won’t be attending. I’ll send someone to collect you and bring you

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to the estate.”

She didn’t wait for a response.

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The call ended with a sharp, decisive motion of her thumb.

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Miles away, the glacial winds of Lunaris tore through the station like a living thing, sending spirals of snow skittering across the platform. Frost clung to every surface, biting and relentless -yet none of it touched Eldric. Heat pulsed beneath his skin, fierce and consuming, as if something caged within him was clawing to break free.

His daughter had grown defiant.

Unruly.

Daia stood beside him, her expression paling as she lowered her gaze. Orion lingered nearby, hands in his coat pockets, his face indifferent, as though the tension in the air had nothing to do with him.

“Cora is under a lot of pressure right now,” Daia said gently, resting her hand against Eldric’s arm, “She’ll send someone. There’s no need to be upset.”

“Upset?” Eldric scoffed. “She thrives here because of my support. My resources. Don’t pretend she’s done this alone.” His lip curled faintly. “And yet others manage just fine with far less, don’t they? If they can, then my daughter should have done better.”

Daia hesitated. “You mean... Lylah?”

At the name, something unreadable flickered through Orion’s eyes before he spoke. “I heard her mate also works at the Lunar Research Center.”

“And what is he, really?” Eldric’s gaze sharpened, his wolf bristling at the thought. “Another expendable subordinate. A lackey.” His voice dropped, heavy with command as he turned to Orion. “When you enter that place, you will not associate with him. Do you understand? You carry the Ironcrest name. You will not drag it through the dirt.”

Orion inclined his head, obedient as ever.

“You will prove yourself. Rise above them all. And if necessary...” Eldric’s eyes glinted, something predatory surfacing. “You will make sure Lylah’s mate is removed.”

Snow thickened around them, falling in heavy silence, cloaking the world in white, but it did. nothing to dull the razor edge of his command.

“Yes, Father,” Orion said.

Yet beneath the surface, his wolf remained unmoved-no spark of dominance, no hunger for

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the hunt his father demanded. Only a still, hollow quiet where ambition should have burned.

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The day of judgment had come. At the Academy of Lunar Grace, the annual Best Paper evaluation was more than a scholarly event-it was a quiet battlefield. Within the Healing Department, ten carefully selected students now stood on the precipice of distinction.

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Thirteen judges presided over the decision, all of them graduates who had risen to become Verdanth's most esteemed healers. Their names carried weight. Their voices, even more so.

The proceedings were long and exacting, and for years, they had been anything but fair.

The prize was prestigious, and every mentor was fiercely devoted to securing that throne for their pupil, no matter the cost.

So as dawn bled across the horizon, staining the sky in muted crimson, Corvin Vale had already begun laying his groundwork.

He had summoned two of the judges privately.

Andrei of Blackmaw Pack, the lead judge, had been his first choice-but fate, or perhaps inconvenience, had kept him away. In his stead came two others: Sable and Hilal.

Old acquaintances, once his companions in the healing arts.

The room they met in was closed off, heavy with the scent of power-aged parchment, polished wood, and beneath it all, the unmistakable musk of wolves testing territory without ever baring their teeth.

“I won’t waste your time with empty courtesies,” Vale said smoothly, though his eyes gleamed with something far less courteous. “You both know why I called you here.”

Sable leaned back slightly, sharp-eyed and perceptive as ever, “Let me guess,” she replied. “You want our votes, Professor Vale. For your student.”

A faint smile tugged at Vale’s lips-a confirmation.

“Yes. Because, why squander your voices on mediocrity?” Vale continued smoothly. “My student, Cora, is exceptional, a young wolf with a razor-sharp dedication to the healing arts. She built her knowledge from the ground up, despite having the status to simply purchase a title and a name.”

He paused, letting the weight of his next words settle.

“And more than that, she is mated to Rowan Blackfang. A future Luna.” His gaze flickered with

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quiet intent. “In time, she will know how to return such loyalty.”

Sable and Hilal exchanged a glance.

Favor given now could be repaid tenfold later.

And they know Cora would not hesitate to offer her own price.

Still, Vale continued, his tone sharpening.

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“I would have no doubt in Cora’s victory, if only Clark Grimwood’s student hadn’t entered the competition,” He said, his voice edged with quiet disdain. “You remember what he was like back then, ambitious to a fault. The sort who would do anything to force his pupil to the top, no matter how unworthy she might be.”

Sable’s gaze sharpened slightly, thoughtful. “I heard his student was nothing more than a junior assistant from the traditional class.”

“Exactly,” Vale said, his voice darkening. “And imagine the insult if someone like that were to win. Not by merit, but because Grimwood no doubt crafted her work himself.” A low, almost inaudible growl stirred beneath his words.

“It would tarnish this academy. Lower the standard of the Healing Department.”

Silence followed.

Vale stepped closer,

“So I ask you, Sable, Hilal,” he said, voice smooth once more, “consider my offer carefully. I swear it in Selene’s name... your votes will not be wasted on Cora.”

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Meanwhile, the absence of the head judge was no accident.

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Andrei of Blackmaw Pack had served as a judge for the Academy’s highest evaluations more times than he cared to count. His name carried the quiet authority of fairness, his decisions untouched by politics or allegiance. He had turned down offers before-subtle pressures, veiled bargains-but he had always known how to walk away.

This time, however, the summons had come from someone he had never expected.

At the center of his office stood Ezra of Moonclaw Pack.

The moment Andrei stepped inside, the air shifted, thickened. Power pressed in from all sides, primal and suffocating, like the presence of a dominant wolf staking silent claim over territory. Instinct took over before thought could catch up.

Andrei bowed his head.

“Alpha Ezra,”

“Andrei of Blackmaw,” Ezra replied, his tone low, measured. “You’re one of Lunar Grace’s finest graduates, whose reputation speaks of fairness. Of integrity that does not bend.”

The words should have been praise. Instead, they felt like a test.

Ezra’s eyes narrowed slightly. “Has someone approached you before me?”

Andrei hesitated only a fraction. “Yes. Corvin Vale.”

“And you refused.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

Silence fell, heavy and deliberate.

Then, unexpectedly, Ezra spoke again. “I am not here to force your hand. You may stop shrinking and stand as you were meant to.”

Andrei’s head snapped up, shock flashing across his features before he could mask it. He had expected coercion-expected to be cornered into pledging his vote to the Alpha’s Luna. The realization unsettled him even more: the gifted young healer who had occasionally appeared in

the ward... she was Luna of Moonclaw.

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Ezra moved then, rising to his full height. The room seemed to tighten around him. Outside, his guards stood sentinel, ensuring no sound, no secret, would escape these walls.

“Your laptop.” Ezra said.

Andrei blinked. “Alpha?”

“Open it.” There was no raising of voice, no overt threat. Yet the command coiled with dominance, leaving no room for defiance. “It is time for judging.”

Confusion flickered across Andrei’s face. “I thought you-”

“I told you to keep your integrity.” Ezra’s gaze sharpened, something darker stirring beneath the surface. “Did I say I would do the same? I will not stain your hands with this, I will do it myself. You will simply open the submissions.”

The calm in his voice was far more terrifying than anger.

Andrei obeyed.

His fingers moved quickly over the keyboard, pulling up the Academy’s portal. One by one, the Healing Department students’ works appeared.

“Alpha,” Andrei said, unable to hold back, “I’m sure your Luna will win. I have not seen a mind as brilliant as hers in years.” The words spilled out, half reassurance, half instinctive

appeasement.

But Ezra did not react.

“Which one is Lylah’s?” he asked instead, his tone cutting clean through the air. “You speak as though you know her well. Show me.”

Andrei froze.

Because he couldn’t.

Ezra’s gaze moved to the screen, scanning each submission with unsettling focus, as though he could strip truth from ink alone.

“Alpha, the judges are required to leave comments on every paper,” Andrei managed, his voice quieter now.

A faint smile touched Ezra’s lips.

Only a few knew he had not always been only an Alpha, or the force he was in the tech world. Once, long ago, he had stood where these students now stood-under the mentorship of Clark Grimwood, learning the art of healing where precision meant life or death.

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And Ezra had never been one to forget what he had learned.

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Ezra's gaze moved steadily across the screen, line by line, dissecting each submission with unnerving precision. At first, Andrei of Blackmaw had braced himself for clumsy guesses-after all, the Alpha was not known as a healer.

But that assumption unraveled quickly.

Every note Ezra left behind was exact. Insightful in a way that only came from knowledge carved into bone.

The air in the room grew heavier with each passing moment.

Ezra paused when he reached the paper of the Blackridge heir. His eyes lingered, faint recognition flickering. Thane's work was strong. Worthy of standing among the best.

Then the next file opened.

Lylah.

Something in Ezra shifted.

The hard edge in his expression eased, if only by a fraction. He had remained at her side that night, offering sparse guidance, brushing stray strands of hair from her face as she worked. He knew every line before he finished reading it.

The perfect score he gave was not indulgence.

It was truth.

And then-

The next submission.

Ezra stilled.

His eyes sharpened, scanning again, slower this time. The words etched into the page were... familiar. The terminology. The structuring. The specific classification of herbs and symptom progressions...

These were not things easily learned. They belonged to one man.

His wolf stirred beneath his skin,

"How many students does Clark Grimwood currently mentor?" Ezra asked, his voice deceptively calm.

"Only one, Alpha," Andrei replied carefully. "Only your Luna."

Silence fell.

Ezra's gaze dropped to the name on the submission.

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Something dark flickered behind his eyes. His wolf rose fully now, hackles bristling, a low, silent growl reverberating through his chest.

“Come here,” he said at last, his voice dropping into something far more dangerous than anger-cold, controlled, lethal. “I have work for you.”

Andrei moved without hesitation.

Elsewhere, far from the suffocating tension of the Academy, warmth and celebration filled the estate Eldric had secured in Lunaris.

Crystal goblets chimed in careless rhythm, laughter spilling into the air, rich with wine and triumph.

“How could this be surprising?” Eldric declared, his voice booming with pride as he raised his glass toward Cora. “You’ve outshone all of Lunar Grace from the moment you became Corvin Vale’s student, haven’t you? And now you’ve done it again flawlessly.” His grin widened, sharp with satisfaction. “That’s my daughter.”

“When will the official announcement come?” her mother pressed, eyes gleaming.

Cora’s smile was radiant, untouched by even a trace of doubt. “Professor Vale will inform me soon. He’s already assured me the judges are pleased-and that’s what matters.”

The door opened sharply.

Rowan Blackfang stepped. His expression was carved from stone, devoid of the ease one would expect from a man visiting his mate’s family.

But Eldric, buoyed by pride, did not notice.

“Lylah participated as well,” Cora added lightly, swirling the wine in her glass. “Though I’ve heard nothing of her results. It’s safe to assume she’s fallen to the bottom.” A faint, cruel amusement laced her tone.

Eldric let out a low, derisive scoff, the sound roughened by the growl beneath it. “That much was obvious, Cora. I raised her for over a decade, and not once did that useless mongrel show a shred of worth.” His lip curled, baring the edge of a predator’s disdain. “And she thought mating slightly above her status would change anything? Pathetic.”

A soft laugh slipped from Daia, smooth and cutting. “Only Cora has ever embodied the true value of Ironcrest’s princess.”

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Rowan said nothing, observing the scene as it unfolded like a carefully staged play. A faint, knowing smile tugged at his lips. Eldric spoke with unwavering authority as though he understood his daughters to their very marrow.

Rowan almost scoffed.

He had seen sides of them Eldric never had-especially Lylah.

At the sound of her name spoken with such cold disdain, something sharp flared inside him. His wolf bristled in silent warning. Because if anyone had the right to speak her name with that kind of familiarity— harsh or otherwise-it was him.

Six years ago, Eldric had cast her out without hesitation, discarding her like wounded prey left for the forest to devour.

And Rowan had been the one to find her.

He had taken her in, brought her into his territory, into his pack. He had shielded her, claimed responsibility where her own blood had not. Gold had changed hands that day-a transaction meant to erase her existence from Eldric's life-but Rowan had paid that debt many times over.

A dark, possessive certainty settled deep in his bones.

Lylah was his.

And not even her father had the right to forget it.

"Rowan," Eldric's voice cut through his thoughts, "Cora suggested I reinvest in your project. I agreed. That venture you built with Logan... or whichever one it is now." His tone was edged with impatience. "When do you intend to finalize it? When will it start yielding profit? I've waited long enough."

Rowan said nothing, letting him continue.

"If this is just wasted time, I'd rather put my resources somewhere worthwhile." Eldric's tone sharpened. "I have plans for my son. I'll place Orion in the Lunar Research Center among the finest minds in Verdanth. After that..." His lips curved with ambition. "I may step down sooner than expected. Then the Ironcrest Alpha crown will pass to him."

Cora went still.

Her fingers tightened around the delicate stem of her goblet, knuckles paling as something bitter and scorching twisted in her chest.

"But there's a complication," Eldric continued, oblivious to the storm brewing beside him. "Orion is still young. Other Alphas may see that as weakness." His voice dropped, calculating. "So I intend to secure his position early. I'll build alliances. If necessary, I'll buy loyalty. A few well-placed incentives among powerful packs-their Commanders, their councils-they'll side with Ironcrest when the time comes."

His words faded into a dull hum in Cora's ears.

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All she felt was suffocating anger.

Then Rowan spoke.

"Why spend so much," he said evenly, "when your daughter could secure that alliance for free?"

Silence snapped into place.

Rowan turned his gaze to Cora, something unreadable flickering in his eyes. “Isn’t that right, Cora?”

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Her head jerked toward him, eyes blazing, a sheen of furious, unshed tears catching the light. “What?”

“That night at the New Moon celebration,” Rowan continued smoothly, already shifting his attention back to Eldric. “We went to Whitepine Pack, to Ivar the Fearless’ estate. Surely you’re aware your daughter has a... close relationship with Commander Ivar of Whitepine?”

“Rowan-” she tried, a sharp warning in her voice.

“What?” Eldric cut in, his gaze snapping to her, sharp and predatory, “Is this true?”.

His wolf pressed forward beneath the surface, suspicion coiling into something far more possessive.

“And you said nothing. Not to me. Not to your own family.” His voice hardened, a dangerous edge creeping in. “Everything you have, every alliance, every advantage, belongs to Ironcrest. Or have you forgotten your place?”

Cora’s chest rose sharply as fury fully ignited.

Her gaze

burned into Rowan, betrayal and disbelief twisting together. She had guarded that connection like territory-a secret she had allowed only him to scent, to step within.

Not even her own blood knew it.

Now he had dragged it into the open, exposing it under the cold light like a fresh wound.

Cora already felt her father’s expectations cinch tight around her throat, his ambition snapping onto this newfound leverage like a wolf’s jaws locking onto prey.

Orion.

It was always for him.

Never her.

And Rowan stood there as though he had done nothing at all, while her world quietly shifted beneath her

feet.

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Cora lifted her chin, forcing steel into her voice despite the heat coiling in her chest.

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"I wasn't hiding anything," she said smoothly. "My connection Commander Ivar was... a coincidence. Nothing more. That's why I didn't tell any of you. I had no intention of disturbing his quiet, retired life. But don't worry, I haven't forgotten my place as Ironcrest's daughter."

The lie slid easily off her tongue, practiced and precise.

Eldric's rigid composure cracked, something sharp and eager flashing in his eyes.

"Then arrange it again," he said at once. "We'll go to Whitepine together and pay the old wolf a visit." His lips curled with confidence. "There's no reason for him to refuse us. Ironcrest's name still carries strength. Our reputation alone will see us welcomed."

Cora pressed her lips into a thin line, her jaw tightening as her wolf stirred with quiet irritation beneath her skin.

'Ivar had already rejected Rowan and me.'

"I'll make the arrangements first," she said instead, keeping her tone neutral.

"Good." His expression softened into something almost proud. "That's my daughter. You've achieved quite a lot already. It's time you put that success to use for your little brother."

Then, as if the matter were settled, his topic shifted, “I have a gift for you. Every billboard in Lunariss... I’ll have them all reserved.” His voice carried a note of triumph. “They’ll be filled with your achievements on your latest paper. The entire city will see just how exceptional my daughter is.”

Cora inclined her head in acknowledgment, though the words tasted bitter as ash in her mouth.

Billboards?

That was all Eldric could offer. All he thought her worth amounted to.

By the time night fell, Lunariss lay beneath a hush of drifting snow, the city glowing silver beneath moonlight. Inside the warmth of a small restaurant, Lylah, Tiara, and Iris lingered over their meal, the air thick with quiet comfort and the faint ache of impending farewell.

Tiara set her glass down gently, the faint clink lost beneath the quiet hum of the evening.

“My nana called yesterday,” she said, her voice laced with quiet worry. “She fell ill suddenly. I have to return to Blackfang tomorrow.”

Iris froze, her eyes already glistening. “You’re leaving that soon?”

“Sadly,” Tiara nodded gently. “But I won’t forget Lunariss. This place...” Her gaze drifted between them, fond and sincere. “It gave me more than I expected. Memories. People I’ll carry with me. I will return as soon as I

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can.”

“Promise? I’ll wait for you,” Iris whispered, tears slipping freely now.

“I promise,” Tiara said, her voice warm with quiet certainty.

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Later, as they stepped out into the cold, the night greeted them with a bite of chilly air. Snow crunched beneath their boots, the scent of frost and distant pine threading through the city. A sleek black Rolls-Royce idled at the curb, its presence cutting through the quiet like a shadow with purpose.

Lylah paused mid-step, her senses prickling-then her eyes widened as she slid into the passenger seat.

“Ezra?”

Behind the wheel sat Zyrelle, her posture relaxed but alert, her wolf unmistakable in the sharp glint of her gaze. Tiara slipped into the back seat, offering a polite bow of her head.

“Thank you so much, Alpha Ezra and Lady Zyrelle, for coming all the way here to pick us up,”

Zyrelle snorted lightly, easing the car into motion. “Don’t get too formal,” she said, a hint of amusement threading her voice. “I’m only filling in as his Beta for now. Damon’s tied up with some personal matters.”

The engine purred as they pulled into the snow-lined streets.

“You’re taking us to Tiara’s hotel?” Lylah asked, glancing sideways.

Ezra nodded, though there was a faint tension beneath it-something his wolf hadn’t entirely masked. “It’s still snowing,” he said quietly. “I wanted to make sure you got there safely and back. I hope you’re not upset.”

“Upset?” Lylah let out a soft chuckle, shaking her head slightly. “Why would I, Ezra? I was just worried. I might have interrupted your work.”

Her tone was light, but her senses brushed against his, catching the faint ripple of relief that followed.

In the back seat, Tiara sat carefully, her hands folded in her lap as she tried to settle her nerves. The presence of the Alpha and the Moonclaw Pack’s lady pressed subtly against her instincts, their wolves stirring in quiet dominance.

She kept her expression composed, though her thoughts churned.

The mention of a certain name earlier had made her heart throb. Her wolf reacted before reason could catch up.

And yet...

A small breath escaped her.

At least he wasn’t here.

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I was sad that Tiara had to leave so soon. The feeling lingered heavily in my chest, like something unfinished clawing at the edges of my ribs. Still, this was the best decision for now. Once her nana recovered, we could bring her here as well-let her spend a holiday in Lunaris.

Her packing, however, was a chaotic mess.

"I didn't even know half of these things existed," I muttered, staring at the mountain of purchases scattered across the room.

Two suitcases, full. And a backpack stuffed to its limits.

Tiara only laughed softly from the bathroom, where she was stuffing toiletries into a pouch.

"Sorry I won't be here tomorrow to celebrate with you," she called.

I frowned, leaning against the edge of the bed. "Celebrate what?"

She peeked out, brows knitting as if I'd said something absurd. "Your paper, obviously. We already made plans to get dessert with Iris, remember?"

"Hmph." I folded my arms, though the gesture felt hollow. "I haven't received any official notice from the judge yet. Professor Grimwood said my work was appropriate, but the other students' works are just as brilliant." The insecurity slipped out before I could stop it, quiet but sharp.

With Tiara, I didn't have to pretend.

From the moment we met, something in me had recognized her as safe. Not just as a friend, but as someone my wolf didn't feel the need to guard against.

She crossed the room and dropped beside me with a soft huff. "That's not true, and you know it."

I glanced at her, but she only smiled, steady and sure.

"My friend is going to be one of the greatest healers of our generation. Whether you win or not doesn't change that, Lylah." Her voice softened. "You've already won-1 in my heart, Iris's... and Alpha Ezra's. We're all proud of you. Always."

Something warm unfurled inside my chest, melting the tight knot I hadn't realized I'd been carrying.

Before I could stop myself, I pulled her into a tight embrace.

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She laughed, but hugged me back just as fiercely.

VPN

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Finished

Fifteen minutes later, everything was packed.

I dropped onto the bed, exhaustion settling into my bones. But just as I let myself relax, my wolf stirred.

A scent.

Wrong and out of place. It didn't belong to anything in the room, not the hotel's artificial diffuser, not Tiara.

I knew her scent. Bold florals, laced with fresh citrus-bright, alive, unmistakably hers. But this was different. Musk and pine, raw and untamed like the heart of a forest after rain. And beneath it, a bitter citrus edge that stung my senses.

Male.

My instincts sharpened instantly, something primal rising beneath skin..

A stranger had been here.

And my wolf did not like it.

my

I sat up slowly, eyes scanning the room as my wolf pushed forward, alert and uneasy “Tiara, do you smell that?”

She froze. “Smell what?” Her voice came too quickly.

“There’s someone else’s scent here.” I stood, moving instinctively, drawn toward the source. “It’s faint, but it hasn’t faded completely. Like someone was here.”

Her reaction was immediate.

“Lylah!” She rushed forward, panic threading through her voice.

“Really?” I crouched, eyes narrowing toward the space beneath the bed. “Then let me check—”

She grabbed my arm.

“There’s nothing,” she said, words tumbling over each other. “It’s just... there’s a blanket under there. Mine. It’s dirty. Stained from my moon cycle. I didn’t have time to clean it.” She didn’t meet my eyes.

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Tiara never rambled.

Never avoided eye contact.

Something was off.

My wolf paced beneath my skin, restless, unconvinced.

But I exhaled slowly and straightened.

“Alright,” I said at last, forcing the tension down. “If you say so.”

Her shoulders loosened, just barely.

I didn’t press further.

Morning came too quickly. The cold bit sharply against my skin as I stepped out of the car, the gates of Lunar Grace looming ahead, elegant and imposing beneath the pale winter light.

Zyrelle gave me a brief nod before driving off, leaving me alone with the quiet.

I barely took a step forward before voices drifted toward me.

But not quiet enough to escape Selestine's ears.

"You mean the same Lylah who is the former junior assistant? Who is studying under Professor Clark Grimwood now?"

My steps slowed.

Another voice slipped in, sharper this time, dripping with open disdain. "I heard she tried to become Professor Vale's student. But failed, of course."

A low scoff followed.

"That explains it, doesn't it? Always baring her teeth at Cora like some feral thing when Cora's never lifted a finger against her. Jealousy festers," She softly said. "And when it rots, it stinks. Now imagine how she must feel seeing Alpha Eldric's devotion to his precious daughter. The lengths he goes to for Cora..."

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BB

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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.

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

Chapter 319

3rd Person's POV

Lylah's reply cut cleanly through the air,

VPN

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Fincher

“Imagine? No need. I’ll tell you myself-I don’t care about whatever Eldric does for Cora.”

The three she-wolves gathered before the towering billboard turned as one, their attention snapping toward her. They had been standing in quiet reverence beneath Cora’s image and her achievements displayed like offerings to a revered goddess. Now, their focus shifted, sharpening with interest.

And hunger.

Seraphina stepped forward first, a slow, predatory smile curling her lips. There was something eager in her gaze, like a wolf scenting blood on the wind.

“Well, look who decided to show herself,” she drawled. “The mutt is listening to our conversations.” She circled closer, hazel eyes glinting beneath the pale winter light. “No need to pretend you’re so unbothered, Lylah. Everyone already knows your pitiful backstory.”

Every word was honed to a blade’s edge.

“Who would’ve guessed you were nothing more than a stray pup, dragged out of the alleys and raised on the Alpha and Luna of Ironcrest’s mercy?” Her lips curled. “Then their true daughter returned... and you couldn’t take it. You snapped at Cora again and again, hurt her, envied her, until they finally had enough of you.”

The lie slid easily from her tongue.

It was Eldric who created that story-wove it into Lunaris like truth, carried on every whispering breeze.

Lylah had heard it a hundred times.

A thousand.

It is no longer cut.

“I’m glad they cast you out,” another she-wolf added. “Cora’s family is finally at peace.”

“And so am I.” Lylah’s voice didn’t waver.

She looked at them then, and what she felt wasn’t
anger.

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It was a pity.

Their wolves stirred uneasily under her gaze.

VPH

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Finished

“I have my own family now,” Lylah continued, her eyes flashing-violet flickering briefly beneath the surface. “And if you value your tongues, you’ll keep my name out of your gossip.”

Something ancient and instinctive coiled beneath her skin, brushing against theirs-enough to make their wolves recoil.

Then she turned and walked away.

But the shift in her presence lingered behind her like a warning scent. The three she-wolves stood frozen for a moment longer, their instincts unsettled despite themselves.

Still, Seraphina forced a brittle laugh, lifting her chin as if reclaiming control. “Oh? Then try not to cry when you see Cora’s family in the ward. They’re here to celebrate her.”

Lylah didn’t slow.

Whatever they were doing here, it had nothing to do with her

It didn’t matter.

anymore.

By the time she reached the treatment building of Lunar Grace, her expression had smoothed into perfect neutrality.

She almost made it inside unnoticed.

“Wait, isn’t that Lylah?” But Orion spotted her first.

Lylah’s gaze flicked toward them for the briefest second-just long enough to acknowledge their presence-before she continued walking, as though they were nothing.

Behind her, Eldric’s expression darkened. “Acting so high for someone who fed from my table for decades.”

Beside him, Daia remained silent for a moment.

“Let her be, Eldric. We already severed ties with her, haven’t we?”

Even so, her gaze refused to stray from the daughter she had once raised.

There was power in the way Lylah moved—chin lifted, shoulders steady, an unspoken authority rolling off her in waves. There was no trace of the timid pup she once knew. Only a wolf who had found her strength.

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“Father, Mother,” Cora interjected smoothly, slipping her arm through Daia’s before either of them could look any longer. “Come on. I’ll show you the rest of the facilities.”

Daia allowed herself to be led away, though her gaze flickered back once more before she turned.

“Of course, darling.”

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

Chapter 320

3rd Person's POV

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e Finished

Today marked the official announcement of the best paper, and most of the participating students had invited their families. After escorting her parents into the conference hall, Cora stepped out onto the snow-dusted parking lawn. The cold bit against her skin, but it did little to cool the heat simmering beneath it.

A sleek white Maybach door opened just ahead, and Rowan Blackfang stepped out.

“Cora?” His brow furrowed the moment he saw her expression-the rigid set of her shoulders, the fire burning behind her eyes.

“Before you go inside, we need to talk. Now.” Her voice was low, but edged with a growl. “About that night when you brought up my connection with Commander Ivar in front of my parents.”

She stepped closer, her gaze unwavering.

“Now they think I’ve been hiding it, that I was saving it as leverage.” Her jaw tightened. “You know how my father is when it comes to power.”

Rowan exhaled slowly, his expression smoothing into something deceptively calm. “Relax, it wasn’t that serious,” he said, his tone easy-dismissive. “I didn’t mean anything by it.”

The lie slipped from him effortlessly.

In truth, irritation had driven him-irritation at her constant deflection, at the way she kept denying him access to that connection ever since the day Ivar had turned them away at his

estate.

“I don’t want you doing that again,” Cora pressed. “I’ve reserved that privilege for you, for Blackfang. But if you cross the line for the second time, I’ll offer it to my father instead. To Ironcrest.”

Rowan’s eyes flickered.

He understood the weight of that perfectly.

Which was exactly why he needed her tethered-to him, not them.

“Alright, I won’t do it again,” he said at last, stepping closer. His voice dipping into something warmer, more intimate. “I’m sorry, Cora.”

He leaned in and pressed a kiss to her forehead.

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“Forgive me... my Luna.”

Her wolf responded instantly.

The tension in her body eased, the sharp edges of her anger dulling beneath the familiar pull o his presence. Rowan’s lips curved, satisfaction settling deep in his gaze.

He didn’t just know her.

He had studied her.

Every weakness. Every trigger. Every fragile place where her strength could be bent beneath his touch.

And he used it. Effortlessly.

Elsewhere, behind a closed door in a dimly lit study, the atmosphere felt far heavier.

Damon sat behind the desk, his posture rigid, though the storm beneath his composure churned relentlessly. Across from him stood a hotel clerk-nervous, though trying not to show it.

“This is all I could recover. Beta,” the man said. holding out a sealed bag. Inside lay torn fragments of fabric-once part of a hotel sheet. “Lady Ashcroft destroyed it herself. She cut it apart and discarded the rest in the sewer.”

Damon’s gaze darkened as he took it.

“She left Lunaris this morning,” the clerk added carefully. “She’s already returned to Blackfang.

“Already?” Damon murmured.

His wolf stirred, restless-displeased.

Two weeks. She had been here for two weeks, and now she was gone without a word.

The clerk offered a knowing smile, the kind that bordered on dangerous. “You know the old saying—true wolves don’t wait; they hunt what they desire. Perhaps, Beta, it’s time you should

“Let her go,” Damon cut in, his voice sharp enough to silence him instantly. “Her presence here was disruptive enough.”

The words were cold, but they didn’t reach his eyes.

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His

gaze

had already dropped to the torn remnants in his hand.

That night.

Finished

It returned in fragments—fever-warm and dangerously vivid. Heat coiled through the memory, tangled with slipping restraint, with the heady pull of something he should have resisted... but hadn’t.

His breath left him in a rough exhale. He dragged a hand through his hair, as if he could shake the memory loose.

‘Damn it. I was a fool.

The thought burned with frustration, but not regret.

Because beneath the risk, beneath the consequences he refused to name, something far more dangerous lingered.

Her scent—soft, intoxicating—had seeped into his senses until it became impossible to ignore. Her warmth, pressed against him, alive and real. The way she had undone him so effortlessly for the second time, slipping past his control like smoke through clenched fists.

It clung to him.

Like a phantom touch, his wolf refused to forget no matter how much he tried.

“Did she bring anyone else to her room?” he asked suddenly. “Any man?”

The clerk shook his head. “No, Beta. Only you.”

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