

The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

Chapter 5

Read The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel Chapter 5 -

Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

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Chapter 51: I'm Proud of You

Evelyn's POV

"You're not a suspect, Evelyn," Alpha Adam sighed, "I just thought you might have insights that could help us with our situation."

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My shoulders loosened slightly, but I still couldn't look him in the eye. He stood up, moved around his desk, and crouched to my level.

"I've learned about your past experiences," he said quietly. "As a father, it kills me that you distrust us because of what you've been

through."

"I won't force you to tell me anything," he continued. "But when you're ready to share, I'll back you completely. Exposing those who hurt

you takes real courage, not weakness."

I nodded, grateful he wasn't pushing me to spill everything right now.

"About this threat," he shifted topics. "It's more complex than we thought. No scent traces were left at the scene. Whoever did this either

knows how to cover their tracks or has abilities we don't understand."

"What's our best lead?" I asked, focusing on the problem instead of my discomfort.

"Besides the torn Luna mark and threat note? Almost nothing. What's most troubling is the lack of unfamiliar scents, suggesting it's

someone from inside the pack, or someone with access permission.”

He studied me thoughtfully. “I remembered your remarkable scent perception, especially how you can tell the triplets apart. That could be

valuable in our investigation.”

His expression turned serious. “Involving you might upset Luna and the boys, especially since you could be a target too. But as Alpha, I

have to protect the entire pack, even if that means taking risks.”

I nodded. As a pack member, I had responsibilities, regardless of personal danger.

“Here’s what I propose,” he said. “When the time’s right, I’ll invite you to help investigate. I won’t hide this from Luna, and I’ll be honest with the triplets if they ask. Whether you tell them yourself is your choice.”

He leaned forward. “Second, next time you’re hurt at school, I hope you’ll come to me directly. I’ve sensed something was wrong, but

never had proof. Even now I lack evidence, but my wolf and I are deeply concerned.”

‘I don’t want to bother you with small stuff,’ I said stubbornly. “It would make me look weak, like I need protecting.”

“But these ‘small’ issues have piled up into something serious, haven’t they?” he challenged gently. “You stand up for weaker pack members, but suffer silently yourself. If you could truly handle it properly, you’d confront those bullies directly, like you did at the

selection.”

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Chapter 51: I’m Proud of You

“That would only make things worse,” I said, my voice rising. “Even just defending myself verbally wouldn’t be believed. I’m always the

one blamed. More conflicts could get me expelled or suspended.”

‘I can’t lose my education, especially now when I’m so close to Sentinel training. After everything I’ve sacrificed, I won’t let their crap

ruin it all.”

Tears threatened, but I refused to let them fall.

The door cracked open, and Orion poked his head in, face tight with worry.

“Evie?” His voice was strained. “I felt this sharp pain in my chest. Could barely breathe. You okay?” His knuckles were white on the

doorframe, his other hand pressed against his chest.

“I’m fine, Ori,” I took a deep breath, trying to calm down. “Really. I’m okay.”

He frowned but nodded, closing the door without coming in.

Alpha Adam looked at me curiously. “How long has he been able to sense your emotions?”

“Not sure exactly,” I admitted. “I think it started after the selection. When Luna told me about the Luna mark, I had a panic attack. He

somehow felt it and found me.”

“He said he felt pain in his chest, and his wolf wouldn’t settle until he slept on my floor, right next to my bed.” I tried to sound matter-of-

fact. “Everyone was in my room that night. Is that... weird?”

“I’ve never heard of such a connection,” Adam said thoughtfully. “It’s extraordinary.”

He seemed about to continue but changed direction. “The main reason I called you here is something else. Alpha King Nathan, Conrad, and Taric were impressed by your performance. They want you to join Sentinel training.”

I stared at him, my brain struggling to process his words.

“They want you to begin as soon as possible. Besides Luna, Griffin, and Thomas, I haven’t told anyone else yet, including your father,

My heart stuttered, then raced wildly. Was this real? The opportunity I’d dreamed of for so long was actually happening?

“Really? When? How did they “I stammered, excitement making me incoherent.

”

“Ahhh!” I finally squealed, launching myself across the desk to hug him.

Adam laughed, returning my embrace. “Griffin was right you faced more opponents than anyone else. Those warriors deliberately tested your limits, wanting to see when you’d break. But you kept going.”

“You even made Prince Alistair dizzy. Took him hours to recover.”

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That last comment made me blush, prompting another laugh from him.

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“Alistair didn’t reveal his identity,” he added, “but he will never forget being beaten by someone a quarter his size and years younger.”

“I need time to process this, I stepped back, feeling light-headed. “When can I start? I thought they only took people after graduation.”

“You’re an exception, he smiled. “You’re academically ahead, and they’ve never seen such a gifted young warrior. They don’t want to waste time. They’ll take you after this school year ends, then figure out your specific schedule. But you will definitely become a Sentinel.”

His smile warmed. “I’m proud of you, Evelyn. We all are.”

That simple sentence broke something open inside me. Tears spilled down my cheeks as I hugged him again, burying my face in his shirt.

Only I truly understood what this validation meant.?

They were proud of me the Alpha, Luna, Thomas, and Griffin. They saw my efforts, my achievements. I’d finally made someone proud.

The door crashed open, slamming against the wall.

“Evelyn! I can’t take it anymore. What’s happening?” Orion burst in, face pale. “Max and Luc are pacing outside too. I feel like I’m gonna

puke.”

Magnus followed, looking dead serious. “Dad, what did you say to her?”

“Evelyn, come here,” Magnus said quietly but urgently. “My wolf needs to know you’re okay, or it won’t shut up.”

I chuckled against Adam’s shirt, wiped my tears, and walked to Magnus, letting him pull me close. His whole body relaxed at the contact. Next, I turned to Orion, who looked like he’d just run a marathon. I leaned against his chest, feeling his arms circle around me.

Finally, I went to Lucian and naturally sat in his lap, wrapping my arms around his neck.

“Can I tell them?” I asked Adam through our mind link, unsure how much I could share.

“This isn’t classified, but if you want to process it alone first, that’s fine.” His voice echoed in my head.

I looked at these friends who cared about me. This news meant everything – the opportunity I’d dreamed of for so long,

I smiled at Adam, then turned to my friends, unable to contain my excitement.

“Alpha King Nathan, Conrad, and Taric want me to train to become a Sentinel.

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Chapter 52: Shouldn’t This Be a Surprise?

Evelyn’s POV

The room went dead silent the second I shared my news. Instead of the excited congratulations I’d expected, Lucian tensed beneath me, Magnus’s knuckles went white

against the desk, and Orion – his reaction hit me hardest – actually dropped to his knees like someone had punched him in the gut.

“You can’t be serious, Orion finally said, his voice rough. “We’ve talked about this. You can’t just leave.”

I stared at them, completely thrown. This was supposed to be good news. Why were they acting like I’d announced my own funeral?

“What kind of reaction is this?’ I tried to stand, but Lucian held me firmly in place. This is literally what I’ve been working toward my entire life!

“Working toward leaving us?” Magnus’s voice cracked with disbelief. “Going off to some dangerous training facility with strangers? How exactly is that good news?”

The flash of betrayal in his eyes caught me off guard.

“You’ve got it all wrong,” I said, slowing down my words. ‘I’m not leaving tomorrow. They’ll take me after this school year ends. And it’s training, not a one-way trip to Mars.” I shook my head. “I thought you guys knew how much I wanted this.”

Their expressions didn’t budge an inch. The realization hit me like ice water – they’d never actually supported my dream. They just wanted me here, playing my part in their world.

“Besides,” I added with a bitter edge, ‘in a few weeks you’re all leaving for your fancy summer training anyway. Even Nadia’s going back to

her original pack. Everyone gets to follow their path except me?”

The silence that followed felt heavier than concrete.

Something snapped inside me. Who did they think they were? I wasn’t their possession to control. I’d earned this opportunity through my

own blood and sweat.

I stood up forcefully, making Lucian release his grip. ‘Let go of me!’ I snarled, feeling my eyes flash with anger.

I looked at each of them in turn. ‘So this is who you really are. Acting like friends and family, but actually just trying to keep me in a

neat little box that suits you.”

I turned to Adam, fighting to keep my voice steady. “Can I please be excused? I need some space. I thought becoming a Sentinel was

supposed to be an honor, but now I see all that support was just empty words.”

“Child,’ Adam’s voice was gentle but firm. ‘Give them time to process. Their reaction actually shows how much they care about you.”

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‘Not if caring means crushing my dreams, I stepped back. Alpha, can I please go run in Silver Pines? I won’t go far, I just need air.

Adam studied me, then nodded. “Of course, but you’ll need an escort. This isn’t just protocol – it’s for your safety. I’ll have Thomas of

Griffin accompany you.”

“Thank you,” I said, turning to leave when Orion’s voice stopped me.

“Evie, wait,” he sounded almost desperate. “We can figure something out, find a middle ground.”

“There’s nothing to talk about right now,” I replied coldly. “You’ve made yourselves clear. When you’re ready to respect my choices, you

know where to find me.”

I walked out, leaving them behind. Thomas was already waiting in the hall, his expression telling me he’d heard everything.

“I’ll walk you to Silver Pines,” he said simply. “Then I’ll patrol the boundary to give you space.”

“Thanks,” I appreciated his understanding. “I really need to be alone right now.”

The fresh air hit my face as we crossed the courtyard toward the forest entrance.

‘I’ll stay along the perimeter,” Thomas gestured at the tree line. “Shout if you need me. Don’t go too deep, and stay safe.*

I nodded, then turned to face the familiar woods. The rustling leaves seemed to welcome me as I took a deep breath of pine-scented air

and started running.

At first, I kept a steady pace. But the deeper I went, something primal took over. I pushed harder, faster, like I could outrun all my problems if I just moved quick enough. My feet pounded over fallen leaves and across streams as sweat soaked through my clothes.

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Branches whipped my face and arms, but I barely noticed. All I felt was the wild freedom. I had to prove to everyone to myself that I

could make my own choices.

My foot suddenly caught on a hidden root, sending me crashing to the ground. My palms and knees scraped against rocks, blood welling up immediately. I pushed back to my feet and kept going. What was a little physical pain compared to the fire burning in my chest?

I ran until my muscles screamed, each breath more painful than the last. But stopping meant facing reality that I might never truly

belong anywhere.

The vastness of Silver Pines swallowed me, and my sense of direction blurred. Sunlight filtered through the canopy as time stretched and

warped around me.

You need to stop, my wolf warned. You've pushed way past your limits.

Just a little further, I argued stubbornly. I can't go back yet.

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Running away never fixes anything, she said gently.

But I wasn't ready to listen. I kept pushing until my legs couldn't support me anymore, until my lungs felt like they were filled with acid,

until my vision started to spin and blur.

Finally, I collapsed at the edge of an unfamiliar clearing. My hands pressed into the damp earth as I gasped for air, every muscle cramping

from exhaustion.

A wave of dizziness knocked me flat. I tried to stand but gravity won out. I fell onto the soft bed of leaves, my breathing growing

shallower as consciousness started to slip away.

Is this how it ends? I thought hazily. Alone in the middle of nowhere?

Before darkness took me completely, I vaguely heard distant voices calling, but couldn't find the strength to answer. Then everything went

black.

I woke to sterile whiteness, the sharp smell of antiseptic burning my nose. Fragments of conversation floated around me like I was

underwater.

...small fractures in the bones of both hands and legs, already healing..."

...stress fractures from overexertion..."

...plus those old injuries that never healed properly..."

I tried to move my arms but sharp pain shot through me, making me cry out.

"Ah!"

The voices stopped abruptly, followed by hurried footsteps.

'She's awake! Please, let me see her. Is she alright?' The worried voice belonged to Luna Isabella.

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Chapter 53: For Myself

Evelyn's POV

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“Can someone turn off that damn beeping?” I croaked, my throat painfully dry.

“Thank the Goddess you're awake!” Isabella's voice trembled with relief. “I was so worried.”

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I blinked, trying to focus on her blurry outline. Luna gently touched the tip of my finger, and even that slight contact sent pain shooting

through my hand.

“Where am I?” My memories were jumbled fragments – running through the forest, then... nothing.

“You collapsed in Silver Pines,” Luna explained softly. “Thomas carried you out. You're in the pack hospital now.” She paused, tears

forming. “Why didn't you tell us things were so bad?”

“What things?” I feigned confusion, though I'd caught bits of conversation about my injuries in the hallway.

“The bullying. You said it wasn't serious, that you could handle it.”

Something snapped inside me. “Those beatings? That torture? Who even cares?” My voice rose sharply. “Nobody cared enough to stop it! Not one person at school gives a damn about protecting the weak – they just care about their status and keeping the peace.”

I took a breath, wanting everyone in the hallway to hear. “Students go missing without explanation. Injuries appear that have nothing to do with training. And nobody asks questions. So why bother asking for help when there's no one to rely on?”

“We do care about you, it's just “Luna started.

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‘Just what? No evidence?’ I raised an eyebrow. “That just proves my point not everyone’s voice matters equally. If you’re nobody important, no one sees you. The only ones who matter are those precious future leaders.”

Seeing tears in Luna’s eyes, I felt a twinge of guilt. “I’m sorry. I shouldn’t snap at you. It’s just... complicated.”

‘No, I should apologize, Luna said, brushing hair from my forehead. “We haven’t protected you. I thought about helping but never

considered changing your circumstances. That’s my failure.”

I struggled to sit up, ignoring the stabbing pain. “I need to leave.”

“Your wounds haven’t healed yet,’ Luna protested, but I was already pulling out the IV lines.

“I’ll heal on my own, just like always.” I yanked off the last electrode, triggering an alarm I ignored.

Luna sighed. “Let me at least arrange a proper discharge. You can recover at the lodge where –

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Chapter 53: For Myself

“I want to go to my father’s house,” I cut her off. “I need space. I can’t face those boys right now.”

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She handed me clean clothes. Each movement sent waves of pain through my body, but I refused to make a sound. This kind of pain was

practically an old friend.

The hallway was packed the triplets, Milo, Elliot, Nadia, Adam, Thomas, Griffin, and surprisingly, my father, whose face showed

unfamiliar concern. Anger surged through me again.

“Now you’re all concerned?” My voice was ice-cold. “Save your pity. I don’t need your guilt-driven sympathy.”

I looked around the group. “I’ve been broken for a long time. Even in my darkest days, I found reasons to keep going. Not for any of you –

for myself.”

I turned to Nadia, whose eyes were red from crying. “I’m sorry for dragging you into this mess. You’re the only one who respected my

choices. Your friendship means everything to me.”

Then I walked straight through the crowd without looking back, forcing my steps to be steady despite the pain screaming through every bone. Only once out of sight did I allow myself a moment of weakness, leaning against the wall to catch my breath.

Is this really a good idea? my wolf asked.

I don’t know what’s good anymore, I answered bitterly, but I know I need to get away.

I dragged myself back to my father’s house, slipping in through the back door. I limped up the stairs, each step a fresh agony, until I

reached my old room.

I locked the door and pulled the curtains, welcoming the darkness. No questions, no expectations, no disappointed looks, just me and my

wolf, temporarily escaping everything.

Lying on my bed, I stared at the ceiling. The triplets would leave for special training, Nadia would return to her pack, and Elliot and Milo had their own paths. Whatever choice I made would feel like betrayal to someone.

But one thing was certain – I wouldn’t give up Sentinel training. That dream had been my lifeline for years, the one thing that kept me going through my darkest moments.

Whatever it cost, I’d stay on this path, even if it meant breaking with my past completely.

Nadia’s POV

I hurried down the school hallway, worry eating at me. Since Evelyn had left the hospital, we’d barely spoken. I knew she needed space,

but that didn’t stop me from worrying.

As I headed toward the library, I spotted a familiar figure carefully navigating the camera blind spots. Evelyn! My instincts were right.

She was heading toward the history classroom smart choice. That teacher was one of the few who didn't care about pack politics.

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Just as she was about to reach the door, I caught up and gently grabbed her wrist. She immediately spun into a defensive stance. I dodged

her countermove.

"Whoa, it's just me! I whispered urgently.

"Nadia?" Relief flashed across her face.

"Those idiots are still camped outside your house," I said with a half-smile. "I told them you might come to school, but they wouldn't

listen."

Seeing her wariness, I quickly added, "Don't worry, I'm not here to drag you back. Their reaction to your Sentinel news was pretty

extreme."

She relaxed slightly, though suspicion lingered in her eyes.

"Look," I said, "I don't want you avoiding me, and I won't force you to face those guys. What you're going through is obviously more

complicated than any of us realized. You always bury everything inside, never letting anyone really know you."

I handed her my backpack. "Second period starts in eight minutes. I got your stuff from the lodge and grabbed what you need from your

locker. I talked to the counselor and switched my schedule to match yours. Luna's rule is we shouldn't be alone, right?"

I glanced down the hallway. “Those boys will figure this out, but we’re good for today at least. We’ll need a better plan for tomorrow.”

I turned to leave, but she called after me.

“Nadia,” her voice wavered, “I don’t want to put you in the middle. I know what Milo means to you.”

“Stop it,” I interrupted. “We’re not talking about them today. Right now, you’re what matters.” Tears welled up in my eyes. “I watched Thomas carry you out of Silver Pines, barely breathing and covered in blood. That was the scariest thing I’ve ever seen.

The tears spilled over. “I don’t have triplet’s weird emotion radar with you, but I thought I was going to lose you.”

I wiped my face. “We care about you, Evie. I care about you. But if you don’t tell us anything, how can we help? I didn’t get before how important leaving is to you, but now I see it. This isn’t just about dreams, is it? If you stay here, something in you will die.”

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Chapter 54: I’m Sure This Was Deliberately Arranged

Evelyn’s POV

I stepped forward and hugged Nadia, her tears dampening my shoulder. The simple contact brought a wave of conflicting emotions I

couldn’t quite name.

“I never meant for my problems to mess up your relationship with them,” I said, pulling back to meet her eyes. “You get me in a way no

one else does. But those guys-they just don’t understand what these choices mean to me.”

“You look like crap,” Nadia said, wrinkling her nose. “Let me guess, Elliot and Orion camped outside your door?”

“How’d you know?”

“They blew up Milo’s phone all night,” she laughed, wiping away the last of her tears. “Whining about the hard floor and cold air. Apparently they fell asleep against your door like two guard dogs.”

I couldn’t help smiling at the mental image of Orion and Elliot—normally so composed—curled up outside my bedroom.

“I’m not going back with them, no matter what,” I said, voice dropping. “They need to get that I’m not their property. I can make my own

damn decisions.”

Nadia smoothed my messy hair. “Maybe give them some time? It was pretty sudden.”

I shook my head. “I’ve talked about becoming a Sentinel since day one. They just never took me seriously.”

We made it through morning classes in a weird standoff—the guys always nearby but never directly talking to us. They kept looking my way, then pretending they weren’t when I caught them.

At lunch, we grabbed the farthest table we could find. Nadia kept trying to cheer me up with stories while the boys sat in the center of

the cafeteria, occasionally glancing over.

“You can’t avoid them forever,” Nadia said halfway through her sandwich. “Eventually you’ll have to talk.

I’m not avoiding anyone, I bit into my apple, ignoring her skeptical look. “If they want to talk, they know where to find me.”

“Speaking of finding you, Nadia said, “they don’t know about your window escape route, right?”

“Nope. They think blocking the doors is enough, I took a sip of water. They forgot I’ve been sneaking out windows to avoid my dad for

years.

“Don’t underestimate them, Nadia warned. “They’ll figure it out, especially now that they’re watching you like hawks.”

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Chapter 54: I’m Sure This Was Deliberately Arranged

I shrugged, pretending I didn’t care, though she was right. The triplets were smart-they’d catch on soon enough.

“Did you get Alpha’s message about patrol duty?” Nadia asked.

I nodded. ‘Everyone who’s awakened has to help, even students. Things must be worse than they’re letting on.’

After our last class, I was at my locker with Nadia standing guard when a cloud of sickeningly sweet perfume announced Acacia’s approach. She had her usual sidekicks trailing behind, all wearing smug smiles. Clearly, she saw the rift between me and the guys as her golden opportunity.

“Look who finally got kicked out,” Acacia sneered. “I always knew they’d get tired of your little act. Someone like you doesn’t belong here.”

I ignored her, focusing on organizing my books.

“Don’t play deaf,” she said louder, trying to draw a crowd. “You think you’re special? You can barely keep up in training, always getting

knocked down, needing special help! Your tough-girl act is over.”

The lie was so ridiculous I almost laughed. I stayed quiet, but Nadia glared at Acacia.

“Maybe check your facts?” Nadia snapped. “Evelyn’s beaten everyone on that field, including your so-called ‘future mates.’”

Acacia’s face twisted. She turned to me, voice rising: “You’re back to being nobody again! Look around-no one cares about you, not even

your brother standing over there watching. You never belonged. Why don’t you just disappear?”

I finally looked up, keeping my expression cold. “If you’re done, move. I’ve got stuff to do.”

“Acacia, that’s enough.” Elliot’s calm voice carried a warning that made her instantly switch gears.

“I was just sharing some hard truths,” Acacia smiled sweetly. “Sometimes friends need honest communication, right?”

I took the chance to close my locker and walk away with Nadia. Once we were clear, Nadia fumed, “You just let her get away with that

crap? She was trashing you in public!”

“Fighting back just gives her the attention she wants,” I said. “Besides, I’m curious how Elliot handles this. They finally have a chance to

take a real stand.”

We paused to look back. Elliot stood there while Acacia rambled on, her face smug. He wasn’t exactly defending me, but he wasn’t fully

backing her either-just staying carefully neutral.

“Don’t expect much,” Nadia said softly. “They’re too used to playing both sides.”

I took a deep breath. “Come on, Griffin’s waiting.”

At the training grounds, Griffin was organizing patrol duties. The triplets and Milo were already there, huddled in a corner far from us.

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“Given the circumstances, we’re reorganizing patrol teams, Griffin announced. “Each young warrior will partner with a senior warrior. This gives experienced fighters rest while you gain practical experience.”

He scanned the crowd. “For students, we’ll try to work around your classes. When necessary, you may leave school early or arrive late. The school’s been notified to allow this for warriors with good grades.”

He emphasized, “This isn’t a free pass to skip studying. Your coursework still needs to be done on time. As summer approaches, we’ll rotate partners monthly so those leaving for

special training can learn the process first. Check your assignments on the board. Some of you start tonight.”

While waiting in line to check the roster, I saw the triplets talking to Griffin before leaving without even glancing our way.

When we finally reached the board, Nadia immediately groaned. “So obvious! They’re totally doing this on purpose!”

I looked where she was pointing—we’d been assigned to completely different patrol teams.

“Four in the morning?” I sighed. “That’s targeting my training time. Though I guess it saves me setting an alarm.”

“This was absolutely deliberate, Nadia shook her head. “They’ve noticed the tension between you and those guys. They’re hoping separation will cool everyone down, make you focus on duty instead of grudges.”

I felt conflicted-relieved to escape the triplets, but guilty for feeling that way.

“Let’s go. I’ll walk you home first, then meet Milo, Nadia said, patting my back. “At least let me get you home safely.”

I rolled my eyes but agreed. As we reached the exit, Nadia asked, “Back to your dad’s house, not the pack house?”

“No,” I shook my head bitterly. “That was never home. The Beta residence belongs to my father and Elliot. Even my room at the pack

house feels more like home than where I grew up.”

I glanced toward Silver Pines in the distance. “Going back to the pack house feels wrong right now. I need space. Besides, you’ll all be

leaving this summer anyway. Might as well get used to being alone.”

Nadia hesitated before asking, “This might get me in trouble, but... what about the Mating Ball?”

“What about it?”

“You’re still going, right?’ she spoke quickly, eyes worried. “You promised to go with me since it’s my first, maybe last time. But with

everything so messy now, I wasn’t sure if your plans changed...”

Her voice trailed off uncertainly.

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Chapter 55: I Love You, Sister

Evelyn's POV

"I'll go to the ball for you," I said, squeezing Nadia's hand. "You're the only one who's actually respected my choices. I'll play nice, but

don't blame me if someone pushes my buttons."

"This is why I love you!" Nadia threw her arms around me. "Always there when it counts."

We walked together toward my father's house, with Nadia constantly checking over her shoulder.

"Sure you don't want me to come in with you?" she asked as we reached the yard.

"Go," I nudged her away. "Milo's waiting. I can handle myself."

Once she was out of sight, I slipped in through the back door and headed up to my room. This space that used to feel like a prison had somehow become my sanctuary - the one place I could escape all those complicated expectations.

After finishing homework, I lost myself in a book until darkness swallowed the room. A soft knock interrupted the silence.

“Evie,” Elliot’s voice drifted through the door. “I brought food. It’s outside your door if you want it.”

I stayed quiet, waiting.

“Look,” his voice softened, “I’m not here to lecture you. You have every right to be pissed. Just... don’t shut everyone out, okay?” He paused. “Milo and I have patrol duty, and everyone’s taking shifts. We’ll give you space, but I miss you, little sis.”

The hallway fell silent for a beat.

‘I love you, sister. Always will be, no matter what happens.’

His footsteps faded down the hall. I lay on my bed, feeling a tear slide down my cheek. They cared about me to prove I wasn’t just someone who needed constant protection.

—

I knew that. But I needed

When I was sure he’d gone, I opened the door and grabbed the food. The hot chocolate was still warm, and the sandwiches simple but good. I ate slowly, not from hunger, but because I wanted him to see I’d accepted his peace offering. After finishing, I left the empty plate outside my door and crawled back into bed.

Morning arrived with that fresh scent of dew that only the earliest risers ever notice. I got dressed and considered my usual window escape route, but decided to use the front door instead.

I nearly crashed into Lucian the second I stepped outside.

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Chapter 55: I Love You, Sister

“Whoa, sorry! He steadied me with a quick smile. “Heading to patrol?”

The early light caught his tired face, those blue-green eyes still bright despite the dark circles underneath them. His patrol shift had

clearly been rough.

“Yeah, I nodded, keeping my voice neutral.

Need me to...?” he started.

“I’m good, I cut him off. ‘Going alone.’”

His face fell for a second before he forced another smile. “See you at school then.” He hesitated. ‘Whatever happens, we’re all here waiting

for you to come back.”

Something warm flickered in my chest, but I just nodded and walked past him. The scent of Silver Pines hit me that mixture of pine and damp earth that always felt like home. I quickened my pace toward the patrol meeting point.

Thomas was already waiting when I arrived ten minutes early. “Morning, Evie. Figured you’d be early.”

As I opened my mouth to greet him, Thomas shifted, revealing someone standing behind him. “There’s been a change of plans.

Chloe stood there looking half-asleep, her heavy makeup smudged, wearing a neon yellow tracksuit that practically glowed against the

forest backdrop. She looked like someone had dragged her straight out of bed.

What’s she doing here? my wolf asked cautiously.

No idea, but it can’t be good, I replied. She hasn’t even awakened her wolf yet.”

“Where do we start?” I asked Thomas directly, purposely ignoring Chloe.

“Boundary patrol today,” Thomas explained. “Since Chloe hasn’t shifted yet, we’ll stay in human form. I’ll patrol while showing you both

what to watch for.”

‘Have you talked to the Alpha King?’ Chloe chimed in, her voice painfully high-pitched.

“He stays at the pack house. We talk sometimes,” I answered, deliberately vague.

Thomas gave me a curious look. He knew I normally loved discussing strategy with him and couldn’t figure out why I’d suddenly clammed up. But I wasn’t about to show off any real skills in front of Chloe. She only showed up to training to get close to the guys she couldn’t care less about actually being a warrior.

“We’ll take one of seven possible routes today,” Thomas continued. “This keeps our patterns unpredictable while still covering the whole territory.”

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Chapter 55: I Love You, Sister

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We started jogging along the boundary, Thomas quietly explaining tracking techniques as we moved.

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“Patrol serves several key purposes,” he said. “First, we leave our scent as territorial markers to warn outsiders. Even though water surrounds most of Polaris City, the land connections need constant watching.”

“Second, we create overlapping patrol routes to minimize blind spots. Makes it harder for intruders to hide. Watch for damaged vegetation too broken branches might mean someone passed through. Almost no small animals here since they avoid wolf territories.”

Not even an hour in, Chloe started whining: “My legs hurt! I’m starving! When does this end?”

I rolled my eyes. It wasn’t even 5:30 AM, and patrol lasted until after nine. If she kept this up, even my patience would snap.

“I didn’t know we’d be running the whole time,” she continued. “Delta Griffin said my partner would be a Gamma. I thought he meant someone else.” She glanced nervously at Thomas, suddenly realizing how that sounded.

“What exactly did you think patrol meant?” I couldn’t help asking. “What did you expect to do with Thomas? We’re protecting boundaries

and preventing intrusions.”

Thomas suppressed a smile while Chloe pouted.

“Not this!” she huffed. “I thought we’d sit in some monitoring room watching camera feeds. Acacia’s dad promised Zoey and I would get high-ranking warriors he arranged. He said they’d do the real work and we’d just observe.”

“Since when,” I turned to Thomas, “can we make demands about patrol duties?” Then back to Chloe: “You never planned to actually help, did you?”

She flinched. Thomas gave me a warning look – I’d almost crossed a line, but I could tell he understood my point.

This made it clear that if Chloe was here, Acacia was probably clinging to one of the triplets, with Zoey assigned to Elliot or someone else. They were putting pack security at risk just to get close to the boys! Did they not understand how serious things were?

“At least you’ve got genuine experts,” Thomas said calmly to Chloe. “Evelyn’s outperformed everyone in her tests. We’ve got miles to go, so you’ll need to power through. We can’t send you back mid-patrol- everyone works in teams, including me. I’ll report this misunderstanding to Griffin when we’re done.”

With that, he turned and continued jogging. I followed closely, realizing this situation was probably worse than I’d imagined.

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Chapter 5

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Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

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Chapter 56: You Were Never Just a Warrior

Evelyn’s POV

Chloe eventually shut up about the whole patrol situation, but that didn’t make things any better. Thomas kept encouraging her to keep up, and she did stop whining, but her pace got slower with each passing minute. Eventually Thomas had no choice but to call other patrol teams to take over our area early.

The whole thing pissed me off. Someone could've been seriously hurt because this important security task was being treated like a dating opportunity.?

After patrol ended, I rushed home for a quick shower, then headed to school. When I reached the front steps, I found Elliot waiting for me, his usually serious face oddly soft.

"I'm sorry, little sis," he said, pulling me into a tight hug. "Nadia told me everything. I had no idea things were that bad for you. We just

thought you were being stubborn or trying to prove something."

He kept his hands on my shoulders when he pulled back.

"I won't try to stop you like those three knuckleheads. If you want to leave, go chase your dreams. But remember, no matter where you

end up, this will always be your home, and I'll always be your brother."

His words made something warm spread through my chest. Elliot rarely got this sentimental.

"How was patrol?" he asked, his mouth quirking into a knowing smile.

"A total nightmare," I groaned. "What's going on with these assignments? How did they even get on patrol duty? Who got stuck with the

other two?"

"Acacia's with Magnus, Zoey's with Milo," Elliot sighed. "All three of them complained non-stop. Acacia actually threw a fit because she

wasn't paired with Magnus or Lucian."

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"That's insane," I said. "There's an actual threat out there, and they're treating patrol like speed dating."

'Acacia's dad pulled strings with the board," Elliot explained. "He tried to pressure Griffin into changing the pairings. It's ridiculous,

turning security into a matchmaking service."

He paused. "But then again, it's not surprising. You do know that Acacia's father is Delta Griffin's brother, right?"

“I forgot about that,” I said. “Poor Milo, having such a relative.”

Elliot sighed, “Anyway, let me walk you to school. Take ten minutes to get ready?”

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“Oh, almost forgot,” he pulled out a bag from behind him. “Luna asked me to give you this. She said ‘when you’re ready, come home. Said you might need this stuff.’”

I took the bag with a nod and hurried upstairs. After a quick shower, I opened Luna’s package and couldn’t help laughing. Inside, alongside my underwear and jeans, were Orion’s tank top, Lucian’s t-shirt, and Magnus’s hoodie. They smelled freshly worn. Subtle, Luna. Real subtle.

I rolled my eyes but tugged on the t-shirt and giant hoodie, rolling up the sleeves several times.

When I came downstairs, Elliot raised his eyebrows at my outfit. “Looks like Luna’s playing matchmaker too.”

“Cut it out,” I muttered. “Didn’t have much choice.”

“You look stronger wearing their clothes, not smaller,” Elliot said. “Weird, I expected the opposite.”

As we walked to school, he handed me an oatmeal bar and orange juice. Ever since the doctor said I was “malnourished,” everyone had

been obsessed with feeding me. If they only knew how little I’d survived on before...

“So, about the Mating Ball...” Elliot said suddenly.

“How did we jump from breakfast to that?” I asked.

“Don’t change the subject!” He tapped my shoulder. “You’re still coming with us, right? Nobody should go alone, especially with everything

that’s happening. Plus, with Sentinel training coming up, this might be your last chance to experience it.”

“I guess,” I sighed. “But honestly, the ball seems kinda pointless now. I’m only sixteen, I hate crowds except around you guys, and I can’t dance. What’s the point when I can’t even find a mate for another two years?”

I glanced around. “Besides, adults just use it for politics, pushing packs together. I don’t want to be paraded around like you are.”

“Aren’t you being paraded too?” Elliot asked sharply.

“What do you mean?”

“The way Dad and others talk about you,” he said bluntly, “you’re basically being shown off like a prize too. Especially now that you’ve

caught the Alpha King’s attention.”

An uneasy feeling washed over me, “I never asked for that,” I said quietly. “You’re the Beta, not me. I just wanted to be a warrior.”

“Evie, you were never just a warrior,” Elliot said, his voice serious. “Even if you don’t see it. That’s why you need people around you who understand your real value. When those guys get weird about other boys talking to you, try to be patient with them.”

He smiled awkwardly. “And yeah, jealousy is definitely part of it. Those three stubborn idiots will never admit it straight up, though.”

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Chapter 56: You Were Never Just a Warrior

That made me laugh for real.

“Even Prince Alistair? I asked, half-joking.

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“Especially him, Elliot shot back. “He gets more female attention in an hour than the triplets see in a week. But the difference is, he

sought you out. You didn’t fawn all over him like other girls; you treated him like a normal person. And you knocked him flat on his ass.

Who knows? Maybe that’s when he fell for you.”

“Don’t you guys like girls showing interest?” I asked, dodging the Alistair topic.

“Casual stuff is fun,” Elliot shrugged, “but most girls want more – status, money, to be a trophy. And our jobs, including mate responsibilities, are crazy demanding. Few of them understand what they’re signing up for. That’s why the triplets keep their distance.”

He stared into the distance. “It’s not about being stuck-up, it’s self-protection. But unless you’ve lived it, nobody gets it. And half the time, it’s not even the girls it’s their parents pushing them at us whether they want it or not. Your situation’s not that different.”

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“I guess,” I admitted, checking the time. “We better hurry before school calls Dad about me skipping.”

“After that hospital speech, I doubt anyone’s calling your father,” Elliot laughed, guilt flashing across his face.

We hadn’t even reached the lockers when Acacia ambushed us with Zoey and Chloe in tow.

“What took you so long?” she demanded. “And why are you wearing Magnus’s hoodie? He never lets me touch his stuff. Take it off right

now!”

“Luna picked these clothes for her after patrol,” Elliot replied coolly. “Got a problem with that, take it up with her. As for being late, we’re within limits, which I would know. Speaking of which, how was your patrol shift? Hope all your demands were met, considering how eager

you were to join despite being completely unprepared.”

Zoey and Chloe mumbled something, avoiding our eyes. Chloe looked even more exhausted than this morning, though she’d fixed her makeup. Early mornings definitely weren’t her thing, and I almost felt bad for her getting conned into this thankless job.

“There was a misunderstanding with our assignments,” Acacia said, flipping her hair. “Daddy will fix it today.”

“Besides,” she continued, “we don’t really need to learn all that stuff anyway. I don’t see why we’re being treated like everyone else.

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Chapter 57: We Cannot Fail

Evelyn's POV

“What exactly do you mean by ‘everyone else?’” I locked eyes with Acacia, my voice sharp. “I’m a warrior, not some random nobody. The patrol schedule is set for the next month and won’t change. Whatever strings your daddy usually pulls won’t work this time. Griffin handles assignments, and since you can’t even finish basic patrol, there’s no special treatment happening. Try putting in actual effort

instead of expecting daddy to fix everything.”

Panic flashed across Acacia’s face.

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“By the way, Evie,” Elliot added, “I need your evaluation report on Chloe by tonight. Griffin wants assessments for all new patrol members.

Remind Nadia about Zoey’s too. At least you two bother showing up.”

He guided me away with a hand on my shoulder.

“You know you just stirred up trouble, right?” I muttered once we were alone. “I don’t get these political games, but they’ll definitely come

after me and Nadia now.”

“Even if they blindfolded you and tied one hand behind your back, you could still wipe the floor with them,” Elliot shrugged. “Besides, after your hospital speech, Acacia’s been less eager to confront you directly. She’s figuring out how much you matter to us.”?

I realized that making peace with Elliot was practically punishment for the triplets. Since I'd started talking to him again, the three brothers had grown increasingly agitated, occasionally growling and muttering in the hallway.

At lunch, I picked an isolated corner table, needing some quiet. I was so lost in thought I didn't notice anyone approaching until Zoey appeared in blue, with Chloe trailing behind in bright pink. They kept glancing around nervously, clearly not wanting to be seen with me.

"We can't fail," Chloe blurted in a hushed voice, real panic in her eyes. "We have to do something! Today's patrol was a disaster, and Thomas keeps giving us these judgy looks. If Acacia's dad can't help, you have to."

"What?" I blinked, caught completely off guard.

"Please, Zoey begged, "We know we sucked and probably don't deserve your help, but we really can't mess up again."

"Acacia dragged us into this," Chloe added with a fake smile. "We didn't even want to join, but she said it was the only way to get close to

the guys,"

"I guess I could give you some tips," I said cautiously, still suspicious. "But it's not easy you've barely shown up to training, and you're

nowhere near the fitness level you need."

"We'll do anything," Chloe said desperately. "Like wearing cute outfits to get attention, or..."

"Stop! Don't even go there," I cut her off, feeling sick. "If you actually want to improve, go to bed early tonight, drink more water, eat real

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food that'll help with your exhaustion. Wear dark clothes on patrol; we're supposed to stay hidden. Show up to basic training every day and actually try. Consistency is the only way to build stamina."

They hurried away with quick thanks, clearly relieved.

"What was that about?" Orion's voice came from behind me. I didn't turn, but his scent gave him away.

"Elliot told them I'd be writing evaluation reports, I explained without looking at him. "Guess they're scared that if Acacia's dad can't save

them anymore, they might actually get cut. Probably never had to work for anything before."

"Hmm," Orion made a sound that somehow contained paragraphs. Then a tray slid in front of me. "Eat more, you're still too skinny." He

turned and left.

The plate had all my favorites – sandwiches, chips, carrot sticks, an apple, and water. I finished everything before heading to class, aware

of the footsteps trailing behind me.

The next few days settled into a strange rhythm. Chloe had actually started following my advice. Her progress was minimal, but at least

she was trying. Friday morning, Nadia mentioned Zoey was making similar efforts.

"Tomorrow after training, we're getting ready for the ball in Luna's suite," Nadia informed me, her tone leaving no room for argument. "No

complaining. We need to be ready by seven because Luna wants to meet in the dining room before we leave."

She spent the day adding more preparation activities, which was starting to drive me crazy. I couldn't understand why we needed so much

time to get ready. I'd agreed to go with her and the boys, and decided to try enjoying it, if only for her sake. Her excitement was contagious she practically vibrated when talking about it.

After our last class, we headed to the gym. Since the incident, nobody had let me train alone. Elliot, Milo, and Nadia took turns as my workout buddies, though we rarely talked

during sessions. The triplets hadn't taken their turn yet, and I wasn't sure if their distance made

me feel relieved or abandoned.

'Luna has everything ready,' Nadia said during our workout. 'The 'after-party outfits' will be in your room so we can change without

anyone noticing.'

My eyebrows shot up, and I stopped mid-squat. 'Seriously? I'm already wearing your chosen dress. Why do I need another outfit?'

'Dresses are for women, formal attire is for men,' Nadia corrected, laughing. 'Besides, I wouldn't argue with Luna about this.'

I rolled my eyes and finished my leg workout. An hour later, we found all the boys 'coincidentally' gathered in the kitchen. Elliot and Milo smiled knowingly, while the triplets just stared at me with unreadable expressions.

Orion barely glanced my way, silently pushing over a glass of honey-lemon recovery drink before leaving. Moments later, I heard the front

door close.

'He's off to patrol,' Milo explained, 'But still making sure you refuel.'

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I took the drink and headed upstairs. To my surprise, Nadia didn't follow. Maybe she figured I was safe in the pack house. I showered and tried to get ahead on schoolwork, knowing the weekend would leave little time for studying.

I woke early the next morning to find my room empty, feeling both relieved and oddly lonely. I was still figuring out how I felt about the boys' behavior. They knew I could handle myself, yet treated me like glass; they claimed to trust me but had secret mind-link conversations behind my back.

After a quick shower, I headed downstairs for breakfast before patrol. Thomas and Orion were talking quietly in the kitchen but stopped when they sensed me. Orion silently handed me a glass of honey-lemon water and turned to leave. I lightly grabbed his arm, stopping him though he didn't turn around.

"Thank you," I said softly, meaning more than just the drink.

His body trembled slightly as he pulled away and hurried toward the stairs like he was escaping. I took a deep breath to steady myself,

then turned to Thomas who'd been watching quietly.

"Ready?" he asked simply. I nodded.

If that interaction was any preview of tonight's atmosphere, I might just skip the ball altogether. Hopefully Nadia would understand, especially if all three brothers were going to be this cold.

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Chapter 58: Ready to Take Us to the Mating Ball

Evelyn's POV

Patrol duty went smoothly as usual. We reinforced surveillance along the coastline and isthmus without finding any signs of intrusion. Since that threatening package arrived, security had tightened – everyone entering or leaving our territory underwent strict inspection.

My brain worked overtime while running. Even as I focused on patrol, I couldn't help analyzing our situation. This threat wasn't random – it had a specific target and timing.

What's got you so quiet? Thomas asked through our mind link.

Just thinking, I replied.

Care to share those thoughts?

I hesitated. Not sure they're worth mentioning. Others have probably considered them already.

I wasn't usually this guarded. Normally I'd share ideas freely with the guys, but with Thomas it felt different. He was an elder, not a peer.

Maybe he was just asking out of obligation.

You know you can talk to me, right? Thomas said gently. Or Griffin, Diana, even Luna. You've been keeping everyone at arm's length, not just

those boys.

I took a deep breath, knowing he was right but too stubborn to admit it.

Let's not talk about this. I doubt we'll find anything significant before the triplets leave for training, I finally said. Even with increased patrols, we're losing several top warriors when they go to the royal pack. Whoever's behind this is probably waiting for that vulnerable moment.

Or maybe tonight's Mating Ball is the target? Lots of outsiders will attend. I paused. But you've probably considered that and taken precautions,

or you wouldn't hold the ball at all.

Unless you're using the ball as bait, I realized suddenly. Though that would be incredibly risky.

I couldn't help a dry laugh, which earned me a strange look from Chloe. She clearly felt excluded from our silent conversation.

"It's not fair that you only share inside information with her because she's Alpha's pet who can shift and use mind links," she said bitterly.

"I'm not anyone's pet, and I started, but Thomas cut me off.

Chloe, even though you can't respond, I can establish a mind link with both of you. Before criticizing others, you should think carefully.

Her eyes widened. She wasn't used to being corrected so directly.

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Chapter 58: Ready to Take Us to the Mating Ball

Regarding your questions, Evelyn, Thomas said aloud, switching tactics, “we’re analyzing those possibilities. And no, we would never use anyone as bait without their knowledge.”

At the word “bait, Chloe looked terrified, completely misunderstanding our conversation.

“I’ll need your patrol assessment by the end of the day, Thomas continued, changing the subject. ‘Please be thorough, even with details

that seem minor.”

Compared to our first patrol together, Chloe had improved slightly. Still, the thought of enduring three more weeks with her wasn’t

exactly thrilling.

After signing out at the cabin, I headed to the training grounds where we held Saturday sessions for the cubs. I realized how much I

missed working with them, seeing their pure joy when mastering new skills.

I paused at the entrance, taking in the scene. The triplets and Nadia each led groups of children, teaching escape techniques. Everyone

looked completely engaged, faces bright with enthusiasm.

“Evie! Look, I did it!” A little girl ran toward me excitedly, grabbing my hand and pulling me into the training area. Her energy was infectious, reminding me of myself at that age. I laughed as she dragged me across the field, not paying attention to where we were going

until I crashed into someone.

Strong hands steadied me before I could fall. The fresh pine scent told me exactly who I’d bumped into – Magnus. Looking up into his eyes, I couldn’t help smiling. This was our second interaction since the argument, and the tension between us seemed to be easing.

I took a deep breath, his scent instantly calming me. A low laugh rumbled in his chest.

“I feel the same way, Evelyn,” he said softly, deliberately using my full name instead of his usual nickname.

Every part of me wanted him to use that familiar term of endearment, but I just nodded and cleared my throat.

“This little girl says she has something to show me,” I said, nodding toward the child still clutching my hand.

“I defeated Alpha Magnus!” She bounced excitedly. “It was amazing!”

I bit back a laugh. “Really? That’s impressive. Not many people can beat an Alpha.”

“Well, kiddo,” Magnus said, his lips curving upward, “looks like you’ve been challenged. And I’m not too happy about you holding Evelyn’s hand. I won’t go easy this time.”

The little girl’s eyes widened as she quickly let go. “I’m sorry, Alpha, I didn’t mean to. I just wanted to show Evie because she’s been teaching us, and...”

“He’s just messing with you,” I reassured her.

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Chapter 58: Ready to Take Us to the Mating Ball

I’m not sure if I was joking. If I can’t touch you, no one else should. Magnus’s voice filled my mind.

I nearly choked in surprise, but Magnus just winked and turned away. “Come on, little one. Let’s show Evelyn what you can do.”

As I gathered my wits to follow them, a strong arm draped across my shoulders.

My turn for a minute with you, Lucian sent through our link. Seeing Max touch you, then watching that kid hold your hand... I got a little

jealous too. He guided me toward the demonstration area, his tone playful despite the possessive message.

“Okay kiddo, show me what you’ve got,” Magnus challenged, crouching down.

The little girl bounced around like a mini boxer, then took her position. Magnus grabbed her but increased the resistance, making her

work harder to break free. On her third try, she finally escaped his grip.

“That was way harder than before!” she complained. “Were you letting me win the first time?”

I started to step forward to explain, but Lucian gently held my wrist, stopping me.

“I’d never lie to you,” Magnus said seriously. “The first time was about learning the movement. As you practice, it becomes muscle memory. And as you get stronger, the challenges increase. Besides,” he winked, “I can’t look too weak in front of the ladies, can I?”

The little girl giggled happily.

A deep growl suddenly erupted from across the training ground. Orion stared at us, his eyes flashing with emotion before he rolled them

and turned to leave.

Just then, a shrill voice cut through from the entrance.

“There you all are!” Acacia called out dramatically. “I’ve been looking everywhere! Luna wasn’t sure where you’d gone. Of course you’re training these adorable little ones how thoughtful!” She fluttered her hands for emphasis.?

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‘I just wanted to make sure you boys will be ready on time to take us to the Mating Ball. We need to make a grand entrance! I heard Prince Alistair might come too, and since you became such good friends during his visit, we absolutely can’t be late.

She posed in the doorway like she was waiting for applause, her expression exaggerated for maximum effect.

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Chapter 59: Stop Trying to Cling to Them

Evelyn's POV

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“Acacia, are you having a conversation with yourself?” Milo walked over, not bothering to hide his annoyance. “We’ve still got two training rounds to finish. And we’ve already made this clear no one’s escorting anyone individually. We’re going as a group, he gestured to our circle of friends, “which doesn’t include you, Zoey, or Chloe. Stop trying to change plans that are already set.”

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Acacia’s face flushed red with either anger or embarrassment, I couldn’t tell which.

“Why don’t you get it?” Her voice rose, trying to cover her humiliation. “My father arranged everything! The triplets are taking me, with Zoey and Chloe. It’s all settled! I expect you to be ready so we can make a proper entrance as future leaders.”

Elliot’s

“Watch your tone when addressing future Alphas,” Orion said, his voice dangerously calm. “Your father isn’t a leader and has no authority over our plans. We’ve told you multiple times that tonight we’re going as one group.” He gestured toward us in the training grounds. “This group. Which doesn’t include you three.”

He swept his cold gaze over Acacia. “As future Alphas, we’ve felt no mate connection to you. The Mating Ball is just tradition for us, not necessity. If you still want to go, maybe we’ll see you there. Nothing more.” He turned and walked away without looking back.

I noticed he’d included Nadia and me when he said “Alphas,” speaking of us as a unit. Watching him leave, I felt torn. He was clearly still upset that I wanted to go, that I wouldn’t listen to them. I took a deep breath. He needed to respect my choices; I couldn’t stay tied down

forever.

Before Acacia could argue more, Griffin approached, clapping to get everyone’s attention. “Great job today, everyone. See you next weekend. Practice what you’ve learned. Luna wants a quick word with you all, so I’ll handle the rest of training. He smoothly ignored

Acacia.

“Hey! I almost won!” the little girl protested, eyes flashing with determination.

‘Next time will be even better, little warrior,’ Magnus patted her head. “Keep practicing, and soon you’ll actually beat me.”

I slipped from Lucian’s half-embrace. “I need to grab something. Don’t wait up; I’ll catch you guys. I headed quickly toward the locker

area,

I didn’t actually need anything – I just didn’t want to leave with them. Despite today’s better mood, things were still awkward. If I had to spend the evening with them at the ball, I needed to figure out how to ease this tension.

After killing about ten minutes in the locker room, I figured they must have left. If they were still waiting, I’d just have to deal with it.

Just as I reached for the door, it swung open hard from the outside. The Impact caught me off guard, sending me stumbling backward.

Before I could regain my balance, a cloth pressed against my face, reeking of chloroform and wolfsbane. I tried to fight, but someone held my shoulders firmly as my strength drained away. Just before everything went black, I heard a high-pitched laugh. Acacia.

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Chapter 59: Stop Trying to Cling to Them

Dripping water. That’s what woke me.

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Amph... Why did my head hurt so badly? Where was I? I tried opening my eyes, but they felt impossibly heavy. I managed a small slit, letting in blurry light. I kept blinking, trying to clear my vision.

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The dripping came from a shower faucet in the locker room. I couldn’t tell if I was standing or lying down everything felt suspended. I

tried taking a deep breath “Ugh!” Sharp pain shot through my chest. Broken ribs. I breathed more shallowly, enduring the burning

sensation. The smell of blood – my own blood filled my nose.

“This bitch is finally awake,” A bright light flashed across my eyes, making me flinch. I hadn’t realized others were here. My nose must be

broken; I could only smell my own blood.

It was Acacia. This was bad. While she hurled insults, I assessed my condition. My toes had little feeling but were there; my knees screamed with pain; my upper body felt wrecked, no sensation in my fingers, shoulders in agony. This was worse than the whipping last

year.

I wanted to speak, but my throat felt like sandpaper, my mouth filled with blood. Even the slightest facial movement revealed misaligned

bones.

“Don’t even think about talking back. I’m here to tell you to stay away from those Alphas. They’re mine.” She kicked my stomach, forcing out what little air I had left. I definitely wasn’t lying down. “Stop getting in their way.” Another kick to my ribs.

“Stop distracting them. A heavy blow hit my other side. She had at least two helpers. “Stop clinging to them.” A slap across my face, warm liquid trickling from my mouth. “They. Are. Mine.” I struggled to focus on her position. She was too far away to be hitting me

herself.

A punch connected with my already fractured cheekbone. I felt a tooth loosen.

“Don’t get her disgusting blood on me. I still need to look perfect for Magnus and Lucian at the ball.” Another punch. “Being close to the Alphas and Luna should’ve been my privilege.” A kick. “You’re nothing, just a useless replacement your father abandoned. Sharp nails raked my cheek. “Listen carefully I. Will. Be. Luna. You can’t stop it.”

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Searing pain pierced my thigh. She was stabbing my legs, then slashing across my arms. I could barely breathe, let alone call out. This felt just like last time she’d used silver powder on me. She really meant to kill me,

I was too weak to even beg for mercy. Because of the wolfsbane, I couldn’t feel my wolf. I mentally screamed, hoping someone might hear, praying someone would sense my agony.

But the wolfsbane had severed my connection with my wolf, probably breaking mental links with

others too.

I heard muffled talking through the pain. Suddenly, my head jerked backward as someone grabbed my hair, tearing clumps from my scalp.

The pain forced a whimper from me.

Then came scissors. Snip, snip, snip. My head fell forward, suddenly lighter. Freshly cut hair fell across my eyes, stinging my wounds. She'd actually cut my hair. I'd been beaten half to death, and she was worried about my hair?

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Chapter 59: Stop Trying to Cling to Them

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“There. Even if you survive, you’ll be so hideous no one would want you,” Acacia sneered. Make sure she stays out until after the ball, preferably a day or two. That gives me plenty of time with those Alphas. If I ever see you near them again, you won’t survive the next round. Plenty of wolves will help me dispose of trash like you.”

Her heels click-clacked across the tile floor, fading as she left.

The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

Chapter 5

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Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

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Chapter 60: Let Me Die

Evelyn's POV

Fists and feet rained down on me like hail. My vision blurring until all I could make out were twisted shadows and light.

I screamed inside my head, calling desperately for help, but no response came. My limbs had gone numb – I couldn't tell if they were restrained or if the bones were broken. Each breath felt like swallowing broken glass.

When Acacia mentioned the ball, I'd sensed trouble brewing, but never imagined it ending like this. I just hoped Nadia was safe.

Warm tears leaked from my swollen eyes. How ironic that I'd meet my end in the training grounds' locker room – the place I'd considered

my sanctuary, where I'd finally felt like I belonged.

Consciousness faded like a receding tide, sounds becoming distant and muffled. I hadn't even said goodbye to those little warriors who

looked up to me. That energetic little girl who'd been so proud to show Magnus her progress...

I wished I could see Orion one more time. His gloomy expression when he last left was now my final memory of him. Elliot had finally

understood and accepted me, and now I wouldn't be able to make him proud.

I took a shallow breath, triggering fire between my ribs. Maybe I should stop breathing altogether – each one only brought new agony. I

felt so tired...

Orion's POV

On the training field, my brothers and I waited for Evelyn to return. Students had come and gone, but she was nowhere in sight.

A sudden chill shot up my spine, raising the hair on my body. I locked eyes with Magnus and Lucian, all of us sensing the same thing.

Without a word, we sprinted toward the locker room.

We ran into Milo and Elliot on the way.

“What the hell?” Elliot called. “Where are you guys going?”

We didn’t stop to explain, and they followed close behind. When we burst through the locker room door, the sight before us stopped us

cold.

Evelyn lay in a pool of blood, her face unrecognizable, body covered in wounds. Her clothes hung in tatters, hair brutally chopped, skin littered with bruises and cuts. Her chest barely rose the flame of her life flickering out.

–

“Evie!” I rushed forward, carefully lifting her upper body. She hung like a broken puppet in my arms. “Hold on. Just open your eyes. Look

at me.”

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Magnus checked her vital signs: Pulse is weak but there. She reeks of wolfsbane.”

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“Wake up!” I gently shook her. “I need you to open your eyes, let me know you can hear me. I know it hurts, but you need to keep

fighting.”

Her eyelids fluttered slightly, and a barely audible moan escaped her throat.

“She’s alive,” Lucian said urgently. “We need to move fast. Evie, stay with us.”

“Who’s... there?” Her voice was fragile.

“It’s us.” I lowered my voice, rage and pain churning inside me. “Your body’s fighting the poison. Don’t give up.”

I turned to the others, forcing down my fury: “Acacia did this. But why is her scent the only one here? This couldn’t have been one

person.”

Evelyn suddenly began convulsing, letting out a heart-wrenching cry. Her body was fighting the toxins, triggering even more pain.

“I know it hurts,” I tried to comfort her.

“Let me die...” she pleaded, her voice barely there.

“Never!” I roared.

Elliot had already contacted Griffin and his father, while Magnus confirmed the hallway was clear before signaling we could move her.

I lifted Evelyn as gently as possible, trying to avoid the wounds covering her body. She slipped back into unconsciousness as we carried

her through the hall.

Evelyn’s POV

Time passed in a haze. When I finally opened my eyes, my vision was blurry. Trying not to move, I slowly surveyed my surroundings.

‘Finally awake, young warrior,’ a deep voice said. “You sure know how to stir up trouble, making everyone worry. But whatever you do, you

never half-ass it, do you?”

I painfully turned toward the voice. Warrior Taric stood by the door, his massive frame nearly filling the entire doorway.

“Where am I?” I croaked, my throat feeling scraped raw. “Why does talking hurt so damn much?”

I tried assessing my condition. My eyes seemed to be the only part that worked without excruciating pain. My body was hooked up to several IV lines and monitors, but the room was oddly quiet.

Taric noticed my gaze. “Those machines were driving me crazy, so I muted them. Speaking of irritating things, when you can talk properly,

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I want to know who did this to you.”

I... don't know...

If you're planning to lie, I can have the doctor give you something to loosen your tongue. But I'd prefer the truth. His voice carried undeniable authority.

I took a breath.

“You want the truth? I've been targeted by the same bully for years.” I struggled to sit up, reaching for water and taking small sips. Taric waited patiently.

“It's a long, crappy story I don't want to get into. She rarely gets her hands dirty – prefers having others do the 'dirty work while she gives orders. This time, they broke my nose right away, so I couldn't smell them. But she showed up to talk, warned me to stay away from the triplets because 'they're hers' and I'm just 'extra baggage.’”

I paused to catch my breath. “When I first reported this stuff, nobody believed me. It's been going on for years. She twists everything with lies, and I get punished for standing up for the weak. She always picks vulnerable targets. That's all you're getting. Next question?”

“Those scars on your back – not from this attack. Same person? When?”

I took a shallow breath, ribs protesting, then changed the subject.

“How about this one answer for one answer. Where am I? Why are you watching me?”

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“That's two questions, but considering you look like roadkill, I'll let it slide.” The corner of his mouth twitched. “You're in Aegis city, royal

pack territory, in their hospital. Everyone agreed this was the best place for you. You've been here fourteen days. Your turn.”

I stared in shock two weeks? My injuries had been that severe?

–

“About my back yeah, same person. She probably didn't do the first whipping herself, but the silver powder was likely her. No proof

–

though I was tied up, couldn't see who was behind me. Only recognized her voice, couldn't smell anything. Your turn who decided to

bring me here?"

"Multiple parties. Given everything, you would've ended up here eventually, just happened sooner than planned. Your turn."

"That barely counts as an answer."

"It's still an answer. His expression remained intimidatingly calm.

I sighed. "You're giving me a headache." A sound resembling a chuckle rumbled from his chest. "What happens now? I'm still too young for Sentinel training, and I've got years of school left. What's the plan?" I didn't hide my irritation.

"That's two questions again. My turn, little one."

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"But... I protested, rolling my eyes. "Fine, ask away."