

# The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

## Chapter 5

Read The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel Chapter 5 -

## Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

### 81

Chapter 81: How Much Do You Know?

Evelyn's POV

“Don't worry about those details,” Luna Selena patted my arm. “What's important is that you continue your training, no matter what happens next.”

Her expression grew serious. “Pack relations are deteriorating. The Rogue Wolf King is gathering strength in the shadows, attempting to control all

territories.”

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She straightened in her chair. “We've had several border skirmishes lately. Normally, this wouldn't raise alarms – packs squabble all the time. But our investigation revealed these aren't from neighboring packs, but an outside force sting our defenses and response times. That's why we have so many warriors patrolling and gathering intel.”

“What does any of this have to do with me?” I asked, completely lost. “I'm just a rookie in Sentinel training without even a mark yet. What impact could a sixteen-year-old possibly have?”

“Your abilities exceed your own understanding, she replied, her silver-gray eyes dashing strangely. “You've developed extraordinary talents far too early, leaving even us uncertain how to respond. You're progressing so quickly that the odds guided us to keep you under the radar until the time was right.”

When she decided you were ready, she led us to Polaris City and arranged that trial for you.”

She studied my face. “You truly don't realize how much you impressed us during selection, do you?”

I shook my head, feeling overwhelmed by everything she was telling me.

“You confirmed what Adam and Isabella long suspected. Among seasoned warrior with years of training, your small frame outperformed every challenger. No favoritism – pure skill and instinct. Then you shocked us again by connecting with your wolf at fourteen. That’s when Nathan and I knew you were

exceptional.”

Her voice softened. “Nathan has his own theories and wants to talk with you privately before dinner. But for now, let’s set aside the heavy stuff and prepare

your armor for tonight’s battle with the elders.”

She clapped her hands, and several Omegas appeared, quickly transforming the room with rows of stunning dresses, a changing area, and a massive gilded mirror. The scene reminded me of my birthday, stirring up a bittersweet feeling. missed Nadia, Elliot, and the boys, wishing I could tell them everything in

person instead of vanishing in chaos.

“Why so quiet suddenly?” Selena asked, noticing my shift in mood.

“This reminds me of my birthday,’ I admitted. “Nadia dragged me shopping while Elliot and the guys waited outside, pretending to be annoyed but actually

being sweet about it.”

I was a Sentinel trainee now I shouldn’t indulge in this kind of sentiment Sucvakness could get me killed in real danger. I straightened my shoulders, looking up to find Lona Selena watching me with a knowing smile.

Perhaps you need some familiar elements, and your friend’s opinion.

The door burst open, and a familiar figure rushed in Thear someone’s attending royal banquet without inviting me to help choose the outfit! Is this

treason?”

“Nadia!” I gasped. “What are you doing here? (1)

“Don’t look so shocked. I’m your official fashion consultant,’ she said, chin lifted roudly Maybe not as lancy as having a prince escort, but I’m the true style expert here.”

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Chapter 81: How Much Do You Know?

Under their guidance, I tried on dress after dress. The room filled with laughter time slipped away. We finally settled on a stunning gown a deep jade silk that made my smoky blue eyes pop and complemented my training-tanned skin.

The material was light and flowed beautifully with movement. Its design accentuated the muscle tone I'd developed from training. The high neckline featured delicate silver embroidery forming moon and star patterns around the neck and shoulders, cleverly extending to partially hide some scars. The back was covered with semi-transparent jade chiffon adorned with tiny crystals that caught the light like stars.

When dealing with people who only care about appearances," Nadia winked, you need to beat them at their own game. Look flawless, but unlike them, you've got substance underneath that's real power."

Just as we finished, a steady knock came at the door.

"Are all ladies decent in there?" Alpha King Nathan called, his deep voice tinged with humor. "I'd hate to cause any awkward situations."

Didn't I already tell you through our mind-link that you could come in?" Selena sighed. "This stubborn old man is always so careful," she added under her breath.

With age comes wisdom, Nathan said as he entered, smiling gently. Those without daughters don't understand proper timing after dress selection."

He walked to his wife and placed a tender kiss on her forehead. The gesture reminded me of Adam and Isabella's warm interactions - one of the few genuinely loving relationships I'd witnessed in Polaris City.

Nathan straightened and turned to me. "Before you start preparing for tonight, could I borrow some of your time? We need to discuss certain matters privately."

I nodded, thanked Luna Selena sincerely, then promised Nadia we'd talk about school arrangements later before following Nathan out.

We walked silently down a corridor decorated with ancient tapestries until we reached a massive glass door. Attendants opened it for us, revealing bright sunlight and an enormous terrace spanning this entire side of the castle. Its left side connected naturally with the mountain while the right extended in a half-moon shape, offering a breathtaking view of the landscape below.

Nathan led me down cleverly designed stone steps to a perfectly manicured lawn bordered by colorful flowers, with ancient oaks casting shadows in the distance. As we continued walking, the tension built. We'd been walking nearly ten minutes without a word.

Ahead stood tall hedge walls forming an intricate maze. When we entered and quickly turned right, I was surrounded by green walls Nathan could easily see over, but I could not.

"Sorry for all the secrecy," he said, his voice solemn in the quiet. "I'm concerned about eavesdroppers. These hedges were grafted with wolfsbane, which weakens sound transmission. Even with my Alpha King hearing, I can't penetrate this natural barrier. Our conversation will remain private here."

"So that's it! I sighed with relief. "I thought I was in trouble. Pretty clever design who knew plant grafting could do that?"

I think you can guess where this idea came from,' his eyes twinkled.

"Dr. Harrison and Dr. Diana definitely have some unique creativity," I smiled, remembering Nadia's descriptions of her parents.

'Indeed. They discovered this property during an expedition and applied it here. This natural sound insulation works better than artificial barriers in conference rooms, and it's nearly impossible to plant listening devices in a maze where people move while talking.'

"Honestly." I admitted, "when you brought me to this secluded, soundproof place, got a little nervous. Did I mess up somehow?\*

He chuckled warmly. "No, child, you've done nothing wrong. I just don't want anyone overhearing us. I have some questions, and then I believe I can provide

some answers too."

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Chapter 81: How Much Do You Know?

“Go ahead, I straightened, bracing myself.

Nathan walked a few steps, then turned to me. His gaze was both gentle and cautious.

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I know your father Raymond was born in Polaris City’s pack – we have complete genealogical records – but about your mother, how much do you know?”

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Chapter 82: How Could I Be Related to the Royal Family?

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Evelyn’s POV

The question about my mother hit me like a physical blow. I felt my breath catch as tears threatened to spill. Of all topics, this was the last I expected.

“Almost nothing.” I admitted, my voice unsteady. “In Polaris City, mentioning her was basically forbidden. Like some kind of taboo no one would break.”

I quickened my pace, hoping to change the subject, but Nathan wasn’t about to let it drop.

“This conversation is directly connected to your mother,” he said, his tone gentle but determined. “But the story starts much earlier. You’re old enough now

to understand your true heritage.”

‘I’m just a Beta’s daughter, and the second child at that,’ I said with confusion. There’s nothing special about me.”

“Quite the opposite. He stopped walking, turning to face me. “The truth about your background is far more complex. Remember those extra tests during your hospital stay? Even then, I had my suspicions, based on your extraordinary abilities and what I saw during your trials.

“My trials?” I frowned. “Weren’t those tests designed for all candidates?”

His lips curved slightly. “We needed a way to evaluate your abilities without drawing attention. Taric, Conrad, and I created those challenges specifically to

test your reactions.” He winked. “You should be thanked’ for your ‘contribution’ to our future selection process.”

“After day one, I knew Adam was right about your potential. But when you defeated Alistair in wolf form, that confirmed everything. Even without his full princely powers, Alistair should have been able to withstand your attack. Only someone with royal Alpha blood could beat him so easily.”

I stared at him, stunned. “Are you saying I have royal blood? How is that even possible?”

“It’s not a theory,” he stated firmly. “It’s fact. You are my aunt Eleanor’s granddaughter. In other words, you’re my niece, Alistair’s cousin.”

The revelation hit me like a sledgehammer. I followed Nathan mechanically through the maze, trying to process what I’d just heard.

‘So Elliot is..’

“By blood, he’s my nephew too,” Nathan nodded. “But in royal bloodlines, firstborn daughters have special significance. This isn’t just about status – it

involves inherited abilities.”

My heart raced. Would Nathan finally tell me about my mother? No one in Polar not even Luna Isabella, had dared mention her, fearing my father’s

reaction. All I knew was that I looked like her, and Elliot had inherited her hair color.

Let’s sit, Nathan gestured toward an elegant stone bench. “This might be easier to take in if you’re seated.

Only then did I notice we’d reached the maze’s center. Six exits led in different directions from a circular clearing. The surrounding hedges housed beautiful flowers in neatly trimmed recesses. Shepherd’s hooks hung with wind chimes and crystals that caught the sunlight, giving the space a magical quality.

Stone benches encircled the open area. I could imagine children playing here yes ago, having pretend tea parties and adventures

“Thought you might like this place, Nathan smiled. “My mother and aunt spent uch of their childhood here. Let me start from the beginning. Feel free to ask questions.”

I nodded, equally nervous and eager to finally learn about my family.

“Does Alistair know we’re cousins?” I asked suddenly.

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Chapter 82: How Could I Be Related to the Royal Family?

Yes. Selena, Adam, and Isabella know too. But no one else, and I’d prefer to keep it that way for now.” Seeing my disappointment, he added. “I know you want to tell Nadia, but secrecy protects everyone right now. I’ll explain why.”

“What role do I play in all this?” I asked, trying to focus.

Nathan took a deep breath. “When the Moon Goddess found wolf packs becoming too numerous to manage alone, she chose Alphas to govern different regions. Knowing human nature would complicate things, she gave Lunas the ability to communicate with her, balancing the Alphas control.”

“Without a mate blessed by the Goddess, no Alpha King reaches their full potential. Our powers remain balanced, which has prevented major wars between

kingdoms.”

“Over time, my grandfather noticed that firstborn daughters in our family possessed special gifts – healing powers in wolf form, extraordinary strength or speed, even the ability to influence thoughts. Most notably, their wolves often had rare silver fur.”

I gasped, my hands clenching. My wolf was silver-blue.

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“You see it now,” Nathan nodded. “That’s another reason I watched your trial so closely. Silver is extremely rare a power symbol in our family.”

“My great-grandfather kept detailed family records. He had two sons Adrian, the eldest and rightful heir, and Carlos, who challenged tradition. This caused

the first major split in our family.”

I covered my mouth, somehow sensing where this was heading.

“Adrian agreed to a duel, Nathan continued, his eyes reflecting respect for our history. “He understood his strength and knew his brother was easily swayed by emotion. Carlos demanded a public confrontation so the entire pack could witness his rise.”

“Our current warrior trials actually evolved from that duel. The training grounds were packed with spectators, and the outcome was predictable – Carlos lost.

and Adrian inherited the throne.”

Sunlight filtered through gaps in the hedges as Nathan’s voice deepened. ‘From that day, Carlos’s heart filled with bitterness, which he passed to his descendants. His son Ryan similarly craved power, but with Adrian already having an heir, he had no legitimate claim.”

“Carlos’s daughter, however, chose differently. She refused to join their power struggle, being a natural healer. Her wolf was pure silver, her saliva able to

heal wounds rapidly.”

“This made her incredibly valuable in battle, so valuable that her father and brother imprisoned her for years. Only after finding her destined mate were

they forced to release her.”

“She had a daughter whose wolf was also pure silver. More importantly, she could resist her uncle and grandfathers Alpha aura and even influence others thoughts. Unfortunately, they were both treated as test subjects, subjected to horrible experiments.”

Nathan’s face darkened. ‘Carlos and Ryan discovered something special about our family’s females and began investigating why these gifts went to women rather than men. Their hatred warped their minds; they believed it unfair they hadn’t received the throne or special abilities.

“We believe they injected these women’s blood into themselves, possibly even using black magic. As for what happened to those two women...” He paused, his expression heavy. ‘I’ve never known for certain. I can only hope they didn’t suffer further.”

‘Seems your family has its dark chapters too,” I said, trying to lighten the mood. guess every family has its villains.

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The Lightning Wolf Chronicles

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## 84

Chapter 84: You Arrived with A Reputation

Evelyn's POV

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I hesitated to respond to Nathan's comment about the training center. We walked through the castles massive doors, our footsteps echoing against marble

floors as servants bowed to the Alpha King.

"Look, I don't want to cause any trouble," I finally said. "If I've done something wrong-

"Quite the opposite, Nathan cut in. "Your performance has been exceptional. Tari says you've shown remarkable adaptability."

We ducked into a quiet hallway lined with ancient tapestries, away from where others might be waiting.

"Trust yourself, little warrior," Nathan said, his voice softening. Raymond didn't est hurt you physically. That constant neglect destroyed something deeper.

But he wasn't the only one. I see it in your eyes – you know you're special, but you've been taught to doubt it."

Colored light from stained glass windows dappled the floor around us. We stoppe in a corner guarded only by silent stone statues.

"Speaking of my father," I said, deliberately changing the subject, 'does he know about any of this? The royal blood, my mom, all of it?"

Nathan's lips twitched. "We had a rather... spirited conversation recently. He wasn't thrilled about me stealing his children. Few people talk to an Alpha

King that way."

"Wait he actually got mad at you?" I couldn't hide my surprise.

"In his own way, he expressed concern. Said as a father, he needed to protect his daughter from those who might exploit her gifts. Nathan shrugged. "But he agreed that with the current threats, this is the safest place for you."

I took a deep breath, trying to process everything. What started as helping Alistar at a fancy dinner had exploded into revelations about royal bloodlines and ancient prophecies. My head was starting to pound.

Does Nadia know about this?" I asked. "What do I tell my friends at the training center who keep asking why I'm here?"

We passed through shadows cast by trees outside the windows. Nathan's expression grew serious.

"Nadia's parents know the basics, and she's smart enough to guess you matter to the royal family. But with the Rogue Wolf King hunting female members of

our family, I need you to keep this quiet for now." He chose his words carefully. "Or other friends, just say you became friends with Alistair after the trials.

That's true, and it makes sense why he'd invite someone his age to the banquet."

"What about my training?" I asked as we emerged into sunlight. From here, the tree looked like it had grown naturally from the mountain itself.

Your basic training won't change, Nathan said thoughtfully. "Though some aspects might need adjustment. You've already noticed some unusual circumstances, haven't you?"

His expression suggested he knew more than he was saying.

"I don't know what adjustments would help, I admitted. But something's been bothering me. Since day one, Seraphina's had it out for me. Back home, people would at least pretend to be nice while plotting behind my back. She doesn't even try to hide her dislike. I get she's establishing dominance, but why target me specifically?"

Even she senses your natural aura, Nathan explained as we crossed the lawn. "She's never met a female warrior who naturally challenges her authority. She's excellent, but her pride limits her. She'll adjust eventually, but she needs time,

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## Chapter 84: You Arrived with A Reputation

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He sounded like he was evaluating her. “You arrived with a reputation. After theals, everyone was talking about you. When they learned you’d start early, it caused a stir. For Seraphina, that probably felt threatening.”

I just want to train like everyone else,” I sighed. “I’m not after any leadership ro. I just got there nobody would follow me anyway.”

“That’s where you’re wrong,” Nathan said, the hint of a smile on his face. “You’ve ready proven your leadership abilities, especially in emergencies. You stay calm, analyze situations, and make decisions. Sophia, Mark, and Cyrus have all seen it. Sentinels need to be ready to take charge at any moment, and you do

it naturally.”

“If you say so, I muttered, looking toward the distant mountains. “I just worry about making mistakes that get people hurt. Polaris City taught me that even small slip-ups can have serious consequences.”

“As a leader, that’s unavoidable,” he replied bluntly.

I looked up, surprised by his candor. I’d expected comfort, not honesty.

Were you hoping for a pretty lie?’ His gaze was both gentle and serious. “You’re natural leader, Evelyn. That path is never smooth. People might get hurt

under your leadership, and you’ll need to learn from it. More importantly, you can’t save everyone. Some people will make destructive choices no matter

what you do.”

I nodded silently. It made sense logically, but putting it into practice would be harder. Maybe that’s exactly why he brought it up.

We entered a massive dining room decorated like something from a fairy tale – wall-sized murals, gold accents everywhere, everything gleaming in soft light.

The room could hold hundreds, but a small table had been set up beneath stained glass windows. Luna Selena, Alistair, and Nadia were already there, deep

in conversation. Nadia spotted us first.

“There you are!” she exclaimed, jumping up. “I thought you’d vanished! Where have you been all this time?”

I shot Nathan a panicked look, hoping he’d bail me out.

“Just discussing tonight’s arrangements,” he said smoothly. “Royal service involves many details and etiquette points that need attention.”

After dinner, Nadia got a call from her parents saying she needed to head home. She hugged me tightly, promising to see me at school Tuesday and demanding details later.

Once she left, Alistair turned to me with mischief in his eyes. “So Dad told you everything? And you’re still breathing normally.”

“Finding out I’m your cousin isn’t even the weirdest part,” I laughed, trying to accept this new reality. “The stuff about special abilities and toxin immunity

needs some processing time. By the way, do the elders know we’re related? Or will they still try to set us up?”

“I wouldn’t mind too much if they did, Alistair winked playfully. At least it would be dramatic, making me laugh.

“But seriously, why are they so desperate to match you up?” I glanced around the by the Goddess. Wouldn’t the elders want that? Shouldn’t they want the Alpha K

save me from girls who just want to marry royalty. He shuddered

able. “I just heard Alpha Kings only reach full power with a mate blessed

to be as strong as possible to protect everyone?”

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The Lightning Wolf Chronicles

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## 85

Chapter 85: I Don't Need Protection

78%

Evelyn's POV

"Some families see mate selection as political chess pieces rather than the Moon Goddess's blessing, Luna Selena said with a sigh. The sunlight streaming through the windows gave her silver hair an almost ethereal glow.

"They're too lazy to find their true mates,' Alistair snorted. "Too much work, apparently."

I nodded, understanding completely. Finding a mate wasn't just about pairing up: it was about becoming strong enough that you supported rather than

burdened each other.

"What's more concerning," Nathan added, "is how certain groups push for 'pure' reval bloodlines, claiming it produces stronger offspring."

"Pure garbage," Alistair muttered. "All it does is make the divide between packs worse."

I caught Alistair's eye, seeing my own worries reflected there. This kind of thinking would only make bridging the gap between different packs harder.

"We can't openly criticize these families, of course, Nathan said carefully before burning to me. "But I think you've got enough to deal with for now. I

imagine Seraphina's counting the minutes until you're back."

"I'll take her," Alistair jumped in, practically leaping from his chair. "We can talk about next week on the way."

I stood to say goodbye to Luna Selena, her scent warm and oddly familiar. When turned to Nathan, I hesitated – would he be okay with a hug?

"Come here, kid," he said, opening his arms. The simple gesture sent a wave of emotion through me. Was this what having a real father felt like? That unconditional support? Before letting go, he squeezed a little tighter, saying more in that silent moment than words could.

As we left, Alistair slowed his pace, letting me take in our surroundings. The walls were covered with huge murals showing ancient legends, and the building itself seemed to grow right out of the mountain, with light pouring through carefully placed windows.

“The castle was built directly into the mountain,” Alistair explained, noticing my curiosity. “Every stone comes from here, supposedly blessed by the Moon Goddess. The builders chose each piece carefully to work with nature, not against it.”

I was about to ask more when I realized we’d reached the car. Sebastian was waiting for us.

Sebastian, could we have a minute?” Alistair asked.

Sebastian nodded and opened the car door. Once we were settled in the back and the privacy glass was up, Alistair pulled five plain envelopes from his

jacket.

“These are for you,” he said, handing them over. “From your friends.”

I took them, confused. “How do you know they’re for me? There’s not even a name on them.”

“I collected them myself,” he said with a hint of smugness. Royal privilege nobly checks what I’m carrying. They’ve all been worried sick about you. When I mentioned I’d be seeing you today, I offered to play mailman.”

I hugged the envelopes to my chest, noticing some were thicker than others. I could already imagine their different handwriting styles and what each might have written.

“I’ll be going back to Polaris City pretty often, Alistair continued. Even after I’m back in school, I can help you stay connected.”

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Chapter 85: I Don’t Need Protection

I just nodded, my mind already wandering. Nathan’s revelations, these letters, my shifting identity how would it all fit together? How could I keep my promises while being honest with my friends?

We reached the training center quickly. I was about to get out when Alistair suddenly wrapped an arm around my waist.

“What are you doing?” I backed away, staring at him.

\*Showing everyone you’ve got powerful friends,” he winked. “Dad mentioned someone’s been giving you trouble here. I want them to know you’re tight with

the royal family.”

‘I don’t need protection!’ I pushed his arm away. “I can handle my own problems

“Be honest,” he smirked. “If Magnus or Lucian, even Orion, saw someone messing with you, would they just stand there?”

“I’m so tired of you self-appointed bodyguards,” I grumbled, though secretly touched by their concern.

“Admit it – you kind of like it,” he flashed what I guessed was his go-to charming smile. “Don’t worry, I’ll keep it subtle.”

Sebastian opened the door, and I expected Alistair to say goodbye, but he insisted on coming in to check out where I was living.”

“Where are these friends you keep talking about?” he asked immediately, scanning the place. “Mark, Sophia, and Cyrus, right?”

“Are you seriously vetting my social circle?” I rolled my eyes but led him to the indoor garden area. My friends were sitting in wicker chairs, looking

surprised as we approached.

“No need for introductions, Alistair jumped in before I could speak. “I’m Prince Alistair.”

It was painfully awkward. Sophia could barely speak, Mark looked at Alistair like he might be a threat, and Cyrus’s voice was even quieter than usual.

“I’m glad Evelyn’s found such good friends, Alistair said, suddenly sounding all official. “I was worried someone might try to use her talents, or boost their

status through her.”

“Us?” Mark asked sharply, looking between Alistair and me.

‘She has more people concerned about her safety than you might think,’ Alistair replied. I shot him a warning look, but he ignored it and cupped my cheek.

“You know it’s true.”

“I can take care of myself, thanks, I tried to move away, but his hand slid to my tuck, almost like he was marking territory.

“We’d never let anyone hurt Evelyn,” Mark declared firmly. “She can protect herself. Your Highness. And we’ve got her back too.”

“See? I’m fine,” I told Alistair, trying to ease the tension. “No need for royal baby tting or inspections. Please tell whoever sent you that I’m okay.”

Alistair ignored me and said: ‘Dad mentioned someone’s been hostile toward you My timing seems perfect. Hope my performance was obvious enough to make anyone messing with you think twice.’”

“What?!” I stared at him. “So you were being over-the-top on purpose? He laugh, clearly pleased with himself.

‘Wipe that smirk off your face, Al!’ I elbowed him in the ribs. He grunted but laughed harder. My friends watched in shock clearly they’d never seen

anyone treat a prince this way.

“Get back to your fancy training,” I sighed.

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Chapter 85: I Don’t Need Protection

‘Don’t be mad, he pulled me into a quick hug. “I need to go. See you Saturday. Walk me out.”

At the door, I complained: “Now I have to answer a million questions, and I don’t want to lie to them. You guys are such troublemakers.”

‘Stop pretending, he laughed. ‘You’re actually enjoying this.’”

A sudden idea hit me. I lunged forward, wrapping my arms tightly around his neck. He caught me automatically, looking confused.

“Going straight back to training?” I whispered in his ear.

“Yeah, why?’ he asked.

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Before letting go, I squeezed him once more. “Just wondering who’ll be more annoyed when you show up covered in my scent?”

I pulled back with a sweet smile, satisfied to see his expression change as he realized I’d used his own tactics against him. Sebastian cleared his throat, clearly getting what I’d done. I turned away triumphantly, hearing Alistair’s resigned sigh as I walked off with a smile.

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### 86

Chapter 86: No Sarcastic Comeback This Time?

Evelyn’s POV

I couldn’t help smirking as I walked away, imagining Alistair returning to training camp reeking of my scent. Petty? Maybe. Satisfying? Absolutely.

Back at the garden, Sophia practically tackled me, dragging me behind a large potted plant.

‘Holy shit, she whispered, eyes wide. “Was that actually Prince Alistair? You two looked... close.”

“It’s not what you think,” I sighed. “He’s just a friend who enjoys being dramatic. The guys back in Polaris probably put him up to this.”

Mark leaned against a nearby column. “Never seen the Prince personally check on anyone before, let alone a newbie.”

“So you’re connected to the royal family?” Cyrus asked quietly, studying me with newfound interest.

“Just through Polaris City stuff.” I shrugged. Before I could say more, a cold voice cut through our conversation.

“Making friends in high places, I see.”

Great. Just what I needed.

Seraphina stood there with her two shadows, arms crossed and eyes narrowed. Her entire posture screamed jealousy.

“Who I’m friends with isn’t really your business,” I replied evenly, “but yeah, Alistair and I know each other.”

“He mentioned many people care about you,” one of Seraphina’s followers said. “What’s that about?”

\*It means exactly what it sounds like. He knows my friends back home and keeps them updated. That’s all.”

I tried to walk away, but clearly they weren’t done with their little interrogation.

“What kind of connections do you have that get you royal attention?” Seraphina’s voice dripped with suspicion.

“I’m the Beta’s daughter,” I said, meeting her gaze directly. “Knowing important people in my home pack isn’t exactly shocking.”

“A female Beta descendant?” her other follower snorted. “Those never come here.

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“What century are you living in?” I shot back. “There are plenty of female warrior and Sentinels now. Maybe update your worldview.”

The dormitory bell rang, saving me from further questioning.

‘Don’t think the Princes favor gets you special treatment, Seraphina warned as parted. “Nobody here cares about your connections.”

‘Never thought they would,” I muttered, just loud enough for my friends to hear

As we crossed the empty climbing area, Sophia shook her head. ‘Is she blind? The Prince was obviously telling everyone you have powerful backing.”

“He laid it on way too thick, Cyrus agreed, absently touching a climbing grip. “Though he doesn’t seem to understand how the Sentinel mark works. Marked individuals don t feel attraction like that, no matter how charming someone is.”

His face suddenly turned red as he realized what he'd said. 'I didn't mean... I was just saying scientifically... the mark suppresses those... um...'

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Chapter 86: No Sarcastic Comeback This Time?

Sophia and Mark burst out laughing. I couldn't help smiling as Sophia grabbed the stammering Cyrus by the arm.

"Come on, Dr. Love, she teased. The mark gives you plenty of time to practice taking to girls like a normal person."

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Back in my room, I carefully tucked away the letters from Alistair. Though tempted to read them immediately, something told me Seraphina wasn't done

with me. Better save them for the weekend when I'd have privacy.

Sure enough, just as I was drifting off after my shower, my door flew open. Seraphina stood there with a victorious smirk.

"Extra training tomorrow morning," she announced. "Don't be late. You need to make up for missed sessions."

I nodded without arguing, which seemed to irritate her even more.

"What, no sarcastic comeback this time?"

"Sunday training was already on my schedule," I replied calmly. "I only push back when I'm targeted unfairly. I don't get why you have it out for me, but I

got here through selection like everyone else."

I looked her straight in the eye. "Alpha King Nathan and Taric brought me here, and you don't get to decide if I stay. You don't have to like me, but treating

me like you treat other teammates would make both our lives easier."

Her face cycled through several emotions before she turned and stormed out, leaving my door wide open. She clearly had issues, and I needed to figure out

what was driving her before things got worse.

Sunday's training was surprisingly civil. Seraphina remained cold but not openly Hostile as we finished morning drills by nine, with an evening session

scheduled before dinner.

During lunch break, I finally opened the letters in a quiet study room. Each one perfectly reflected its writer's personality.

The triplets wrote formal, complete letters – no surprise considering their Alpha training included diplomatic correspondence. Milo's was full of his typical humor, listing what had happened since I'd left and dramatically complaining that I'd taken his "two favorite people" and he might "die alone." Elliot's overflowed with apologies and self-blame for failing to protect me, vowing to find and punish those who'd hurt me.

Each triplet wrote separately, but their messages were remarkably similar – all expressed frustration at my sudden departure but acknowledged their own

mistakes. Lucian hoped I'd find 'more appropriate ways to express thoughts" when I returned. Magnus said he now understood my perspective and

apologized for being blinded by his feelings. Orion issued thinly-veiled threats to whoever hurt me, while demanding I 'gain at least five pounds" before returning or hed 'personally discuss my training regimen with Taric."

They all asked for forgiveness and requested a reply, clearly expecting ongoing communication through Alistair. I smiled to myself, deciding to finish my

assignments before writing back.

After Sunday's extra training, the week passed peacefully. Seraphina remained col but not openly antagonistic. School time with Nadia became precious

moments of normalcy as she shared campus gossip and let me experience regular seenage life.

I breezed through coursework, even advanced classes, simply because I genuinely enjoyed learning. In training, my team coordination improved steadily as everyone found their specialties.

One evening after finishing assignments, I wrote a collective response to my friends. I assured them I was safe, fully healed, and enjoying training. I mentioned seeing Nadia regularly but deliberately avoided details about Alistair and the royal family. No need to worry them with Seraphina drama – I could handle my own problems.

Early Saturday morning, I waited at the training center entrance for Sebastian. Though the formal event wouldn't start until evening. Luna Selena had

arranged for me to arrive early for 'adequate preparation' – whatever that meant

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09:43 Mon, Jan 12 G

78%

Chapter 86: No Sarcastic Comeback This Time?

Sebastian arrived precisely on time, opening the car door with a slight bow.

“Good morning. Miss Evelyn. Lovely to see you again. How was your week?” The genuine warmth in his greeting washed over me like sunshine after a long.

cold night.

## The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

### Chapter 5

Read The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel Chapter 5 -

## Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

### 87

Chapter 87: Your Situation Is Quite Unique

78%

“Someone will accompany you at all times,” he reassured me. “We may put you in front of these people, but we won't leave you to face them alone. Your concerns are valid – some elders are... traditional. They don't appreciate female involvement in strategy, especially someone your age. But times are changing. We now have two female Alphas, and about a third of Sentinels are women. It's natural for them to join defense planning.”

Maybe it was better they hadn't told me earlier – I'd have been a nervous wreck all week.

We arrived at the castle via a semi-hidden path that led to an entrance built right into the mountainside. The stonework blended so perfectly with the surroundings that I wouldn't have noticed it was a door if I hadn't seen it opening

Inside was a spacious underground garage filled with luxury vehicles. Sebastian led me through interior corridors decorated with royal tapestries and sculptures. As we passed a massive floor-to-ceiling window, I stopped dead in my tracks beyond it lay a stunning outdoor pool with graceful curves, its edges designed to look like natural stone, perfectly integrated with the surrounding rock garden.

It reminded me of the park house back in Polaris City. Without warning, images the triplets, Elliot, and Milo flooded my mind.

"Evelyn?" Sebastian's voice snapped me back to reality. We were standing in front of an elevator. I think the Prince would love to give you a proper tour

later. Few people, especially young ladies, appreciate these architectural details the way you do."

That made me smile. I'm definitely not your typical pl. 1 hesitated Speaking which I know I promised to wear that gown tonight, but the Queen isn't

making me wear formal stuff all day, is she?

I believe she understands your comfort preferences, he winked, gesturing me into the elevator.

When we reached Luna Queen's suite, I stopped short just inside the door. The room had been transformed. My evening gown hung prominently, but beside it were at least five other fancy dresses. Another rack held light colored outfits Blouses, jackets, vests, shirts, and my absolute nemesis: pleated skirts. A third rack displayed business attire in cool greens, blues, and purples, while a fourth featured warm tones yellows, oranges, reds, and pinks.

"Don't look so shocked," Luna Selena appeared from behind the clothing forest. First impressions matter greatly in our world."

I stared at her and Sebastian. Are all these clothes really necessary? It's just meetings and dinner. What am I missing here?"

"You haven't missed anything, she admitted. "Isabella and I just thought if we told you everything at once, you'd probably refuse."

Can't argue with that assessment.

“Nathan and Taric have good reasons for wanting you in these meetings,” she continued. “You’re intelligent and have excellent tactical instincts. But things have gotten complicated. When certain elders heard that Alistair’s companion would attend, they insisted on bringing their own daughters to learn about

pack management.”?

She rolled her eyes dramatically. “Nathan can’t stop this without revealing your relationship to the royal family, and if he did that, Alistair would be drowning in girls hoping to become queen.”

I rubbed my temples, feeling a headache building. This was going to be a very long day.

## The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

### Chapter 5

Read The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel Chapter 5 -

## Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

### 88

Chapter 88: So This Is How Beautiful I Can Be

Evelyn’s POV

78%

“Don’t make that face. You’ll do great, Luna Selena said, trying to smooth over my obvious annoyance. Besides, this gives me an excuse to attend meetings

that typically exclude women. I’m actually looking forward to it, though it does mean you’ll be getting more attention than we planned.”

She looked genuinely excited about dressing me up, despite the hint of guilt in her eyes. I tried not to hold it against her.

I’ve pulled together several options for you,” she continued, gesturing toward the racks. “While we get you ready, I’ll walk you through today’s schedule.”

I nodded reluctantly. No point fighting this now.

“The main thing is you’ll be attending three different meetings,” Selena explained watching me through the vanity mirror as a stylist worked on my hair.

“Each one’s pretty long, unfortunately.”

I tried to stay still, nodding slightly so I wouldn’t mess up the intricate braiding. After nearly an hour of primping, I was beyond ready for this to be over. Still, I had to admit, my reflection surprised me. The makeup artist hadn’t caked in foundation but instead focused on my eyes with subtle smoky shadow

that made my blue-gray eyes pop.

Since my eyelashes were naturally blonde and basically invisible, she added a few individual lashes at the outer corners. “This way you won’t need tons of

mascara that might clump,” she explained. I filed that tip away for later. A sweep of rose-pink blush and glossy lip color finished the look.

When they finally set down their brushes, I stared at the mirror. Still me, but... polished. More adult. Put together.

“You look beautiful,” Luna Selena said with obvious approval. “Now for your outfit I think warm tones for the first meeting – something that makes a strong

first impression.”?

I raised my eyebrows, and she caught my questioning look.

\*Clothes require as much strategy as battle plans, especially with these people, he explained.

“You’ll need to change after each meeting,” she added.

“Why?” I asked, then quickly added, “I’m not questioning you this is clearly your area of expertise. Just curious.”

“Since everyone’s bringing their kids now, there’ll be a ton of people,” she explained.

“You’ll get tired and uncomfortable no matter how well these clothes fit. More importantly, it gives us a legitimate excuse to leave the room, which means you get breathing space. Otherwise, you’d be stuck with those people for

hours without a break.”

That made sense. My first outfit was a chestnut-colored jumpsuit that felt surprisingly comfortable despite looking fancy. The pants flowed nicely with sharp pleats, and the top

had a halter-style design with a keyhole front. The waist featured a band of matching fabric that provided structure without being

restrictive.

Luna Selena seemed particularly fond of backless designs. The only coverage for my back was the straps crossing over, with the pants high enough to be modest, but otherwise my entire back was exposed. She paired it with wedge heel in the same color that were actually comfortable to walk in. The outfit impressed me formal enough for the occasion but wouldn't slow me down if this went sideways.

She added some simple matching jewelry, then brought me to a full-length mirror to see the final look.

"Wow," I breathed, genuinely surprised. "So this is how beautiful I can be."

"You've always been this beautiful," she said gently. "We just highlighted what was already there. This way Alistair will have to work a little harder."

1/2

09:43 Mon, Jan 12 G

Chapter 88: So This Is How Beautiful I Can Be

"What do you mean?" I asked, confused.

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"He'll need to figure out how to fend off men interested in you, just like you'll help him with those gold-digging girls," she said with a mischievous smile that left me speechless. "Now, we should head downstairs. We'll have brunch before the meetings - you'll need fuel for what's ahead."

When we stepped into the hallway, Sebastian, Alistair, and Alpha King Nathan were waiting. I suddenly wished I already had my Sentinel mark so I could mind-link with everyone. My wolf and I both felt unusually quiet mentally, not realizing until now how much we'd gotten used to those voices in our heads.

"You look amazing." Nathan said warmly. "Those elders might be so stunned they this morning." He turned to his wife with obvious affection. "And you, my dear, an

actually shut up for once, which means we might accomplish something as beautiful as ever. Matching colors, I see presenting a unified front?"

Luna Selena wore a deep chestnut dress with a pencil skirt and short-sleeved jacket embroidered with navy blue patterns. She looked powerful and ready to take on anyone who challenged her.

Nathan offered his arm to his wife, and Alistair did the same for me. As we walked toward the elevator, my anxiety kicked up several notches.

Sebastian and another warrior entered the elevator first. Clearly, we were descending in groups for maximum dramatic effect. Minutes later, the elevator returned, and two more warriors stepped in, then Alistair guided me inside. I hadn't even noticed these guards earlier – they operated so smoothly and professionally. I wanted to study their methods, but reminded myself I had other priorities right now.

As the elevator descended, Alistair let go of my arm and pulled out a small box.

“This is for you,” he said, noticing my wary expression. “Don't worry, it's from all of us.”

Inside was a delicate silver necklace with six small pendants, each containing a different colored gemstone representing my friends. The gesture warmed my heart. Even separated by distance, they were still thinking of me.

“They were all curious about you coming to these meetings,” Alistair explained as he helped me put it on. “They wanted everyone to know you have friends who really care about you.” I couldn't help smiling as the tiny pendants settled against my collarbone.

“It's beautiful,” I said, touching them gently. “Whose idea was it?”

“Uh, are you asking who came up with giving you a gift, or specifically a necklace he hedged.

“Never mind,” I said, raising my hand to stop him. “I can tell from your face. Once you told them I'd be with you in public, Orion and Lucian probably thought I needed something to show I belong somewhere. Magnus likely suggested a necklace since I don't wear much jewelry.”

“Milo proposed the colored stones – our inside joke so I'd know who it came from And Elliot, making up for lost time, had something engraved on one of them. How'd I do?”

## **The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel**

### **Chapter 5**

Read The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel Chapter 5 –

# Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

## 89

Chapter 89: No Trouble, I Hope?

78%

Evelyn's POV

You've got them figured out better than I thought," I said, adjusting the necklace "So I'm guessing you waited until they all picked their gemstones, then deliberately chose one slightly bigger and flashier just to mess with them. And of course you had to deliver it yourself, so they couldn't control how I got it."

Alistair's jaw dropped. "Okay, except for the gemstone size thing, you're spot on. He shook his head, looking impressed. "Your ability to read people is scary.

Remind me never to get on your bad side. You probably catalog weaknesses in your sleep."

The elevator slowed, and Alistair extended his arm. "Ready for the shark tank?"

"Does anyone actually get ready for something like this?" I asked, taking his arm

"Not really," he whispered. "The trick is looking like you are."

As we stepped out, I immediately noticed the cold stares. My hand instinctively moved to my hip, checking for weapons that weren't there.

We don't need weapons, my wolf reminded me, her voice calm and steady.

I know, I just don't want to mess up this outfit. I actually like it.

If these snobs try anything, our presence alone will intimidate them. Let's see what they do before we bare our teeth.

I took a deep breath, grateful for my wolf's level-headedness. I needed to stop defaulting to making myself small and invisible. Years of hiding had created habits that were hard to break. Nathan and Selena were helping me shake those old patterns, but it took constant awareness.

The entrance hall was designed for large gatherings, with people milling around waiting for things to officially start. Some looked friendly enough; others had that calculating look that screamed "plotting something." The interior surprised me – the outside was all

natural stone and old-world charm, but inside was sleek and modern with black and white marble floors in intricate patterns that probably looked amazing from the balcony above.

I was taking in the artwork when a brunette woman about Alistair's age swooped in. She completely ignored me, putting her hand on Alistair's shoulder like they were old friends.

'Prince Alistair! It's been ages,' she said, her voice dripping with honey. 'I've missed seeing you around. Been busy with all that training?' She batted her eyelashes in what I guess was supposed to be cute but looked more like she had something in her eye. Alistair stepped back slightly, bringing me with him and forcing her to drop her hand.

I've spent most of summer with Evelyn and her pack,' he said, gesturing to when my arm was linked with his, making it impossible for her to keep pretending I didn't exist.

'Oh! You're so tiny I didn't see you there,' she said with fake surprise. 'I hope the Prince has been keeping you and your little pack safe. She tried turning back to Alistair, but my expression must have caught her attention.

'Actually, I smiled sweetly, Al came to work with me this summer. He and Natl widened, and I couldn't tell if she was more offended by my casual use of their

are creating new training protocols and wanted my input. Her eyes met me or the suggestion they'd come seeking my advice.

'I didn't know you went by nicknames now, Al,' she said, voice artificially sweet. That's hot. I like it.

'I don't,' he replied coldly. 'You should call me Prince Alistair. Only Evelyn gets at privilege. He winked at me and turned us away just as the elevator doors opened for Nathan and Selena. We followed behind them, leaving the woman standing there looking stunned.

'You realize you're painting a target on my back, right?' I whispered.

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09:43 Mon, Jan 12 GB.

Chapter 89: No Trouble, I Hope?

A 78%E

'The second you showed up on my arm, you became a target,' he said, meeting my eyes. 'Since that's happening anyway, might as well have some fun with

it.” He glanced over my shoulder, barely turning his head, then looked back at me with mischief written all over his face.

“What are you planning?” I asked suspiciously, though I had a pretty good idea who he’d been looking at.

“Nothing I haven’t been given permission to do,” he said quietly before placing a light kiss on my cheek, uncomfortably close to my lips. It didn’t feel bad

exactly, just... wrong somehow.

I understood what he was doing – keeping others at bay – but I wasn’t sure how much I could play along. Maybe it was knowing we were related, or maybe just knowing he wasn’t my destined mate, but those kinds of gestures should be reserved for actual mates. Still, I forced myself to go with it. This was my job, my duty.

As I progressed in Sentinel training, I’d face more complicated missions. I couldn’t let personal feelings get in the way of doing what was necessary.

Alistair guided me through the hall to a formal dining area. I’d expected some modern buffet setup, but instead found long tables with pristine white tablecloths edged in gold embroidery. Crystal chandeliers hung from the high ceilings, completing the royal atmosphere.

When we reached our seats behind his parents, servers appeared instantly to pull out our chairs. Once seated, beautifully plated dishes arrived from all directions. The silverware was engraved with elaborate crests, and the plates were white porcelain with gold trim.

I must have been staring at them too long because Nathan suddenly appeared beside me.

“Those crests represent significant events that led the Moon Goddess to establish the Alpha Wolf King system and territorial divisions,” he explained. “Even after our society established a hierarchy, some still sought power they hadn’t earned.”

He gave me a meaningful look, and I nodded. That problem still existed today, but with Alpha Wolf Kings sharing a mission to maintain peace and protect secrets, they were always ready to help in crisis, preventing wars from recurring.

He pulled out my chair at the main table next to Alistair. “You’ve done well so far he said. “No trouble, I hope?”

I glanced at Alistair, then told Nathan, “Nothing major, though the jealousy competition is already in full swing. Alistair nearly choked on his water.

“Let me guess, Nathan said as he settled beside Alistair, which family’s daughter was it?”

“The Cairns girl,” Alistair muttered. “We hadn’t even left the elevator. Her approach has gotten a lot more... direct since I last had to deal with her.”

# The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel

## Chapter 5

Read The Lightning Wolf Chronicles Novel Chapter 5 -

# Souls Bound By Promise – Timothy Nelson

## 90

Chapter 90: I Might Have Crossed a Line

\$ 78%

Evelyn’s POV

The royal banquet hall hummed with conversation as representatives clustered around circular tables for breakfast. I sat next to Alistair, trying to appear calm despite my nerves. With Alpha King Nathan and Luna Queen Selena at our table, even the most important Alphas kept their distance.

When the servants cleared away the last plates, Alpha King Nathan stood. His voice carried effortlessly through the hall without seeming forced.

“Respected city Alphas and representatives, today we’ll discuss matters concerning our kingdom’s security. The first meeting will take place in the East Wing Hall, focusing on defense force deployment across our cities. Please arrive in fifteen minutes.”

As I got ready to stand, a young Omega girl in a dark gray uniform approached with a deep blue leather folder. My name was embroidered on it in silver

thread.

“Miss Evelyn, I’m Alana,” she said with a small curtsy. “I’ll be assisting you today. Please let me know if you need anything.”

“Nice to meet you, Alana,” I replied, noticing her surprised reaction to being addressed directly. “It’ll be good to have some company, especially someone as

professional as you.”

“Thank you, miss,” she said, relaxing a bit as she lowered her voice. “Some guests can be... difficult with Omegas.” She glanced around to make sure no one was listening.

“If I mess up anything, just tell me straight,” I told her. “You’re here to help, not just follow orders. And since this is my first time at meetings like this –

what exactly is this folder for?”

“It contains agendas for today’s meetings, a castle map, and reference materials you might need,” Alana explained, visibly warming up. “The last pages are blank for your notes. Alpha King and Luna Queen had these made specially for you.”

Alistair walked over and offered his arm with exaggerated formality. “Ready for the first round of battle?”

“As long as it’s just words flying, I think I can handle it,” I said, taking his arm.

As we headed out, Alana followed slightly behind, quietly filling me in on details. We’d be attending three meetings: defense resource allocation for border cities, enhancing the southern monitoring network, and optimizing the royal family’s security.

My stomach tightened. Just yesterday I’d learned about the “Rogue Wolf King” organizing attacks on outlying cities. These meetings were about countering that threat. I might not know politics, but tactical defense was exactly what I’d been training for.

The East Wing Hall looked impressive – a huge circular oak table dominated the enter, with ancient maps and portraits of previous Alpha Kings on the walls. Once Nathan and Selena sat down, the other Alphas took their seats according to rank. Alistair guided me to sit on his right, which earned us some pointed looks.

Before things officially started, a muscular middle-aged Alpha spoke up loudly: “Fury City needs to prioritize Fury City’s defense!” His voice bounced off the walls. “We’re the eastern frontier’s first line! If Fury City falls, the entire kingdom at risk! Every city around us has been attacked in the past three years. It’s just a matter of time before we’re next!”

I recognized him immediately – Samuel, Fury City’s Alpha, known for being stubborn and difficult.

“Alpha King Nathan, Samuel continued, balancing between pleading and demanding, “we need at least twenty elite warriors stationed permanently in Fury City, or I can’t guarantee border security. Every other city’s gotten support – why are we being left out?”

I couldn't help but chuckle softly. He reminded me of how Raymond acted with am-outwardly aggressive but inwardly insecure.

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Chapter 90: I Might Have Crossed a Line

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My laugh caught Samuel's attention. His sharp gaze snapped to me, then expectantly to Nathan, clearly wanting him to stold me for being disrespectful. The

room went dead silent.

pha Samuel of Fury City, Nathan said calmly, this is Evelyn, future Sentinel of the Polaris City pack. I believe she has insights regarding your situation

Samuel frowned, looking me up and down. "Her? His voice dripped with doubt. What could a kid who hasn't even finished wolf training possibly know?

His dismissal stung, but I kept my cool. This was something I'd learned at Sentinel training control your emotions, stay focused

Alpha Samuel, I met his eyes directly, you keep asking for help, but what about Fury City's own defenses? In the last six months, how many civilians have gotten basic self-defense training? What about those watchtowers you were supposed to build? Have you planned and practiced evacuation routes?

I paused, letting my questions sink in. The room went completely silent

"We need this information to figure out what kind of help you actually need." I continued. "A month ago, a team from Polaris crossed your territory after Blood Moon City was attacked. We noticed some big problems with your coastal defenses especially the lack of sea monitoring points."

A warrior standing behind Samuel suddenly lit up. You re the on

new patrol routes.

he started before Samuel glared at him, but he kept going anyway, "You designed those

I nodded, waiting for their response. Everyone was so quiet I could hear them breathing. The warrior was clearly mind-linking with Samuel, and after a few seconds, Samuel turned to me.

We've been using those patrol routes your team suggested, but we really don't have enough warriors. Especially along the coast – the terrain makes it hard to set up a complete monitoring system.

So you haven't started building those watchtowers? And no civilian defense training either?" I asked directly, though I already knew the answer. Last year, we specifically recommended three strategic watchtowers to cover the entire coastline, plus basic training for all adults.

The timing hasn't been.... ideal for implementing those plans," the warrior answered awkwardly. "There were some... priorities with resource allocation."

Security doesn't wait for ideal timing." I said firmly, channeling Griffin's lessons "Every day you delay could cost lives. I don't think you get what Sentinels actually do we provide expertise and tactics, but you have to implement them locally. This isn't about sending warriors to stand guard; it's about building defenses you can maintain yourselves."

Samuel's expression darkened, but I kept going. This wasn't about politics – people's lives were at stake.

Sentinels can help with temporary defenses, but real security means every pack member can protect themselves and their families. You need these basics first, then we can talk about more advanced cooperation. This isn't a negotiation tactic, Alpha Samuel – it's just basic survival."

After I finished, I realized I might have stepped over the line. This was a meeting of high-ranking Alphas, and I was just a trainee. I nervously glanced at Nathan and Selena, worried I'd caused problems.

To my surprise, they didn't look upset at all. Selena gave me a small approving nod, and Nathan's lips curved into what looked like a satisfied smile.