

Claimed And Marked By Her Stepbrother Mates

Chapter 261-He Looked Wild

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Helanie:

He had excused himself and left to go out and do something. I figured he wanted to drink, so I didn't bother him. But now that I was alone in the room, I sat on the bed and checked my phone. Specifically, the academy group made by top seniors, juniors, and even Sydney.

I didn't have an account under my name, so I didn't get the entry to join, but that's when I relied on Lamar. He started sending me a series of things.

Mainly about the videos being leaked of what happened today with Rayden. Just like I had expected, Alpha Byron was making that video for himself. Not really for himself. I didn't expect this next part. He had uploaded those videos everywhere.

Some of the comments read:

Julia P: It's about time. This jerk has harassed me on the road once. I guess he was driving with one of his friends. They were catcalling me and being rude to me.

Rylie: That's Raynard, that explains his toxic alpha male mentality.

There were countless comments like that. I wasn't surprised to see he was a serial offender, but the fact that none of the girls were ever listened to broke my heart for them. But then there were a few men commenting under the posts that made me shake my head in disappointment.

RockyPioneer: You see how the girls are coming out with their stories? Where were they before? It's like they want attention.

Ken: Of course, the she-wolves that couldn't have him are now having the moment of their lives.

Rubie: Huh! Girls are so dramatic. I'm so glad I'm not like them. I want to hear his side.

Reem: Hate feminism. They teach women to act so miserable. A guy says hello, and they're offended and harassed. See how the two people in the video are consenting adults? Why is he being shamed for his kinks?

I was annoyed.

He wasn't being shamed for his kinks. He was being shamed for having a mate, manipulating her, and then cheating on her.

I put my phone down as I knew our next step already. After a few minutes of doing nothing, I got up to reach the door to look for Emmet when he came back inside himself.

"Here," he was holding a sandwich and some drinks from the vending machine.

"I am sorry for freaking you out earlier. I should have known you would blame yourself for it," he was thankfully very polite and had calmed down now.

"Please, eat something." He didn't look me in the eye while he placed the food down on the bed for me and reached for the chair.

I'm sure it will be a lot harder for him to sleep on the chair since he was much bigger and broader.

"Emmet, you can take the bed," I insisted, but he gently waved his hand to deny.

And I was wrong about him leaving to drink. He didn't come back smelling like alcohol.

After we were done eating in silence, I laid down in the bed, not comfortable with him being on the chair, but he wouldn't let me give up the bed. I dozed off since the storm was hitting the windows, and I didn't want to stay awake and be terrified of the noise.

I had only been asleep for a little when, just ten past 1am, I woke up to the sound of the wind almost knocking the window down. My heart was pounding so hard, as if someone had knocked my heart out of my chest.

I looked around the dark room and was instantly made aware of the empty chair next to the window. The curtains had been pushed to the side earlier by Emmet, who kept looking outside the room to the window.

But now the room was entirely silent. I rolled out of the bed and tiptoed to the window, looking outside to see if I could get a glimpse of anything.

It was so dark and windy, but the thunderbolts would light up the outside just a little before it went back to being dark again.

"Where could he be?" I asked myself as I stared at his phone lying on the table between the two chairs.

He left his phone behind. He wasn't in the bathroom either. Could it be that he left to get something from the vending machine again?

I was scared of the outside because it was an unknown place, and I didn't even know how bad the storm was going to get.

I reached for the door and opened it, leaving for the vending machine. Halfway through, I could see that Emmet wasn't at the vending machine.

"Where did he go?" I was so worried for him.

I didn't want to go back inside when he was outside in the storm. He was very anxious and nervous earlier, so it made me even more worried for him.

"Excuse me, have you seen the guy who came with me?" I asked the lady sitting behind the counter, smoking a cigarette.

She tilted her head and gave me a quick head-to-toe stare, examining every inch of me. "Nope!"

Her response was so cold and careless.

"Okay, thank you!" I didn't know what else to say. I returned to my room as there was nothing else I could do. And for the rest of the time, till 3:30 a.m. in the morning, I had taken so many steps.

My soles were on fire, and my toes were hurting from the brisk walk. I was worried, so worried. And then my worry reached its height when I heard scratching from outside the door.

Even when I should have been worried and scared of what it was, my instinct was that it was Emmet.

I ran to answer the door, and as soon as I opened it, I came across a sight so terrifying that I froze for a minute.

He stood before me, but he wasn't the Emmet that I know.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 262-Norman Is Always Irritated

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"Emmet!" His name escaped my lips in a desperate plea. I was horrified by how he looked. His body was covered in blood, his shirt in his hand, and only his pants were intact.

He looked weak, breathing heavily and leaning against the doorframe.

I quickly glanced outside before grabbing his arm to pull him inside.

Once he was in, I laid him down on the bed and turned on the light to check on his wounds properly. He had left a blood trail when coming inside. That made me worried for him.

"No! Don't—" he groaned in pain, placing his hand over his eyes.

He seemed too sensitive to the light, but that might have been because he'd lost so much blood.

Scratches covered his body, and then I noticed something on his neck that terrified me.

It was a bite mark—a dark, deep wound.

"Emmet, what happened? Who did this to you?" I asked, panicking as I knelt beside him on the bed. But he seemed too exhausted to respond.

I watched him stare blankly at the ceiling before slowly slipping into sleep.

It felt strange standing so close to him and seeing him shirtless. His muscles and abs were tense, and his tattooed arm was smeared with blood—his or maybe someone else's.

"Shit! What do I do?" I muttered. I got off the bed, struggled to pull the blanket out from under him, and then covered him with it.

There was no first aid kit in the room, and when I ran to the counter to ask, the woman there told me she didn't have one either. I was sure she just didn't want to help—she looked tired and high on drugs.

So I came back to the room, scared. Whoever had done this to Emmet was still out there. If someone could hurt a strong man like him, I didn't stand a chance.

Once I was back inside, I grabbed my phone and tried to think of who to call for help.

Kaye and Maximus came to mind, but I decided to call Norman instead. He was the one always ready to help his brothers, so he seemed like the best option.

As I dialed, I could feel my heart pounding in my chest.

He finally picked up, and I started rambling. "Norman—he—he's here with me. A motel—no security—he told me to let him sleep, but he was awake—and then not... I was so worried, and then—and then—" I couldn't string a single sentence together.

"Helanie! What's going on? Take a deep breath and tell me," he said, his urgency clear over the phone.

"Okay," I said, taking a deep breath before starting to explain everything that had happened during our stay here in detail.

"He said he wouldn't leave tonight," I heard Norman mutter, though I could tell he wasn't talking to me. Then, in a cold tone, he added, "I'm coming over there. Don't bother him or try to wake him up. He'll be fine."

"But he's lost so much blood—" I began, but Norman cut me off before I could finish.

"He'll be fine. He's very powerful. If you want to help him, stay away from him and don't even think about checking outside," he warned before abruptly hanging up.

Even though the call had ended, I nodded to myself and then went to sit on the chair.

There were moments when I desperately wanted to wake Emmet or at least check on him, but Norman had sternly told me to keep my distance.

As the minutes dragged on and turned into hours, a knock finally came at the door, filling me with hope. I'd been sick with worry about Emmet the entire time.

The moment I opened the door, Norman stormed in, forcing me to step back quickly to avoid him trampling over me like a welcome mat. He was wearing black pants and a white shirt, his sleeves rolled up. Oddly, I noticed scratches on his arms.

I shut the door while he went straight to his brother.

I moved closer but made sure not to interfere as he reached for the blanket covering Emmet. He paused, realizing I was standing right next to him.

"You can go sleep. I'll take care of him," he said, pointing to the chairs, clearly suggesting I put them together to make a makeshift bed.

"I can't sleep like this! He's hurt, and you expect me to lie down and rest?" I protested, shaking my head at the idea. Norman had brought a bag with him, so I assumed it contained medical supplies.

"Helanie, there's nothing you can do. You're more useful when you're not talking or when you're sleeping," Norman said dismissively, waving a hand as if to shoo me away.

His tone annoyed me. "I can help him. Give me that," I said, reaching out for the bag.

To my surprise, Norman pulled back, staring at my hand like it was something strange.

"You want to give aid to a shirtless trainer and your stepbrother?" There was a subtle hint in his eyes that he found it inappropriate.

"I gave you aid the other night," I said, folding my arms over my chest in annoyance.

"That was aid? I thought your plan was to waste my time and let me bleed to death," he hissed, lifting the blanket just enough to clean Emmet's wounds. The way he did it was strange—almost like he was trying to hide Emmet's body from me.

"Oh, so you knew what I was trying to do." My sarcastic confession made him clench his jaw.

"It's not easy to kill me, Helanie. You'll need to do more than just that. Now hush and go away, blonde!" The more Norman tried to dismiss me, the more irritated I became.

"I'll help with the bite mark," I said, determined.

The moment I mentioned the bite mark, I saw Norman's head snap up, his expression sharp and questioning. In that instant, it felt like he wasn't upset about Emmet being bitten but rather about me bringing it up.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 263-He Said, Hush Blondie!

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Helanie:

"What? What is that look?" I couldn't understand why he kept glaring at me like that.

"You examined his body? Even after I told you to stay away from him?" Norman hissed through gritted teeth, his eyes clearly showing his disapproval.

"It's not like I did something wrong. He came in shirtless! What did you expect me to do? Tell him, 'Hey, put on some damn shirt because your brother won't like it?'" I

groaned, reaching to snatch the cotton swab from his hand, but he quickly grabbed it back.

"I told you I don't need your help. It's inapp—" he started but stopped abruptly when he noticed I wasn't listening anymore. I had leaned down to take a closer look at the bite mark on Emmet's neck.

"How many times do I have to tell you to stop examining him?" Norman's sudden yelling startled me, making me step back instinctively.

"He wouldn't be okay with you staring at his bare chest—" he began, but before he could make it sound even more awkward, I jumped in to defend myself.

"Can you stop making everything sound so sexual? I'm just worried about him!" I snapped, not understanding why he was so insistent on keeping me away from Emmet right now.

"You don't need to be. Besides, he probably transitioned, came across some rogue, and got into a fight," he explained, offering his theory.

I didn't find his explanation convincing at all, but since he kept demanding that I keep my distance, I decided to respect his wishes. I wouldn't want Emmet to feel uncomfortable.

With a heavy sigh, I walked away and plopped down on the chair with a thud, annoyed beyond belief with Norman. He was like a man plucked straight from my worst nightmares.

I watched him work on Emmet's wounds, knowing full well that Emmet would heal completely by morning. Until then, though, Norman was doing his part. Once he finished tending to the injuries and had even managed to get a shirt on Emmet, he went to the bathroom to wash his hands before coming back to stand by the bed.

"So, what exactly happened that brought my brother here?" Now that he was done with Emmet, he thought I'd entertain his questions.

I didn't respond and kept staring out the window. He couldn't control me. First, he wanted me to shut up, and now he wanted answers.

"I believe I'm asking you something," I could hear the frustration dripping from his voice.

"Your brother already told you everything. Stop looking for excuses to talk to me," I replied, feeling oddly satisfied with how easily I got under his skin. Every time I hinted at him wanting my attention, it seemed to send him into full beast mode.

"Huh? Me? You think I want to talk to you?" he hissed, but I held up my palm to silence him.

"Don't come asking for my help next time," he shot back. He was such a baby with anger issues. I didn't say anything else, and he, clearly irritated, stormed over and grabbed the chair I was planning to rest my feet on.

With an annoyed huff, he yanked the chair away and sat on it with dramatic force. The poor chair didn't stand a chance—under his weight, it creaked and then suddenly gave out.

The next thing I knew, Norman was falling to the ground in slow motion, right before my eyes.

His expression was priceless. His eyes widened in shock, and a deep frown crept across his face as if he couldn't comprehend that he was actually falling. Then, with a resounding thud, his backside hit the ground, and his eyes shut briefly in disbelief.

A wave of laughter bubbled up from my stomach and burst out of me like a force I couldn't contain. I laughed harder than I had in years, so much that my eyes teared up and my vision blurred.

I couldn't even see his reaction anymore because my eyes had practically shut from laughing so hard. My mouth was wide open, and I could barely catch my breath.

"You have no shame," I faintly heard his voice through my laughter, which began to fade as I struggled to regain control.

When I finally managed to open my eyes, I found Norman leaning over me, his finger pointing in my face, his expression furious.

"What—did I—do?" I tried to stifle my laughter, but another uncontrollable giggle escaped me. I accidentally spit on his finger in the process.

"Ew!" he pulled his hand back and wiped his finger on his shirt to clean it.

"You're acting like a child," he snapped, clearly pissed off. I could tell he wasn't used to experiencing something as humiliating as a fall.

"Okay, okay—I'm sorry. Are you...hurt?" I asked, managing to straighten my face for a moment.

He was breathing like a bull, his chest rising and falling as his eyes lingered on my face. After a moment, he scoffed, about to respond—probably to say he was fine—but then, unfortunately, I lost it again. The laughter bubbled out of me until tears were streaming down my cheeks.

"You're so annoying, Helanie," I heard him mutter in frustration.

He turned away, walked over to the small closet on the side, and grabbed a sheet. To my surprise, he spread it out on the floor next to the bed and sat down in the dark. That was...odd.

I had expected him to demand the couch or something more comfortable, but instead, he leaned his back against the wall and stretched his legs out as if it didn't bother him at all.

The room fell silent, and my laughter finally died down. Guilt crept in—I did feel bad, but honestly, his fall had been so funny. For once, he had looked—funny.

I noticed him shifting his legs slightly. One foot rested on top of the other, and every now and then, he'd move one foot, shaking it a little.

It went on for a while. I had my legs pulled up to my chest, dozing off here and there, but every time I woke up, he was still awake. His legs kept shaking throughout the night.

And then I began to wonder—was he not sleepy? He had stormed into the motel like a man on a mission, so I figured he must have been exhausted, even for someone as strong as a werewolf.

But sleep always won with me. After a few times of waking up, I eventually gave in and drifted off completely.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 264-The Lycan Killed Two People

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Helanie:

I woke up to Norman constantly leaving and coming back into the room. It happened a few times before I finally gave up and sat awake.

It was around 7, so I was basically sleep-deprived. But who can sleep with someone as noisy as Norman staying in the same room?

This time, when he came back inside, I got to see firsthand how he thought he was being careful about not making any noise. He was tiptoeing, but that was actually

louder. Every time he took a step, his shoe made a cracking noise. Since I was sitting in the darker corner, I bet he didn't notice I was awake.

He took another step and groaned when it made a sound. I noticed him looking down and then behind him, inspecting the floor.

"There's paper stuck to your shoe," I finally spoke up, making him look shocked that I was awake. "You're so loud and annoying."

I watched him groan and then straighten his posture. He was holding food items in his hands. I let a little light in by pulling the curtain aside, making sure the part of the bed where Emmet was sleeping stayed covered. That's when I noticed all the food wrappers scattered on the ground.

My eyes went back to Norman, and he looked restless. He was holding so many bags of food and drinks.

He followed my gaze to his hands and cleared his throat, probably to explain why he was on an eating spree.

"Are you okay?" I asked before he could explain, and the sudden change in his facial expression was surprising.

He seemed caught off guard that I had asked him that.

"Huh?" he said, probably wanting me to repeat myself.

"You couldn't sleep all night, and now you seem restless. Is everything okay? Is it because of the cold floor?" I got up, speaking to him in a softer tone this time.

"Yeah, cold floor!" He quickly looked away and sat down on the sheet, putting the food in front of him.

I felt like he couldn't eat properly now that I was standing in front of him.

"You can come eat some. I didn't bring this just for myself. I thought maybe you two would be awake," he said, clearly lying as he avoided eye contact.

"How is he?" Since watching him look so uneasy made me feel bad, I decided to act like I hadn't noticed his anxiety.

"Oh, he's fine," Norman replied. His fingers kept fidgeting, like he wanted to grab the food and dive into it but was holding himself back because of me.

"I'll go freshen up," I said quickly, rushing into the bathroom to give him some privacy.

After I showered and came out, I realized he had cleaned up the room and left some food on the table. It was probably for me, since I was the only one awake. But where was Norman?

I walked over to the bed to check on Emmet, and he seemed to be sleeping peacefully.

However, his slightly pouty lips and calm face made me stop and stare at him for a few minutes without even blinking.

He looked adorable.

There was something very soothing about Emmet. Or maybe I was just drawn to him because of the mate bond I felt with him.

I had to snap myself out of whatever daydream I'd gotten lost in. I wanted to go look for Norman—I didn't want another brother to disappear and then come back all bloody. And Norman, of all people... it would be hard to patch him up. Last time I tried to help him, he looked so disappointed in me.

Luckily, I found him outside. He was pacing back and forth with something white in his hand. It was cold outside, and I could see his breath turning into mist. I carefully closed the door behind me and leaned against it, crossing my arms over my chest.

"So you smoke, huh?" I commented, successfully getting his attention. He turned toward me and held up what he was holding—it was a lollipop. Then he opened his mouth and let out the fog, showing it was just from the cold.

"So you smoke, huh? Go mind your own business, blondie," he mimicked my tone for the first half of the sentence, catching me off guard after proving he wasn't actually smoking.

"Why are you so hostile?" I asked, watching him hold the lollipop in his mouth as he kept pacing from one end of the ground to the other.

"I'm just like that. Don't talk to me if I'm too much for you," he replied coldly.

I'd had enough of his attitude. I turned around to go back inside but was suddenly hit by a strong scent of rosewood as my nose bumped into Emmet's chest.

I quickly stepped back and looked up at his face.

"Emmet!" I blurted out.

"Hey, morning!" His voice was so comforting compared to his brother's. Emmet had a small smile on his lips as he watched me.

"Hey, how are you feeling?" Norman yelled, hurrying over. I had to step away before he squashed me under his big foot.

He placed his hands on Emmet's shoulder to check on him.

"I'm feeling much better," Emmet answered, giving his brother a hug and patting his back before he turned his head to me.

"I must have scared her a lot," he pouted.

"She was fine—" As Norman kept being Norman, I jumped in.

"I was worried about you," I answered for myself.

"Let's go inside. I'll get you some food," Norman had to interrupt, almost like he was on a mission to stop Emmet and me from talking.

We all went inside, and the first thing I did was check my phone since it kept beeping.

While the two brothers stood near the bed, talking about what they could eat, I read the texts from Lamar.

He had sent quite a few.

Lamar: Where are you? Are you okay?

Lamar: Helanie, turn on the news.

Lamar: Right now!

I frowned. Of course, Lamar didn't know I hadn't gone home last night.

So, I checked my phone for the news.

"What do you want for breakfast, Helanie?" Emmet asked me while I kept my eyes on my phone's screen.

"Brain!" I heard Norman mutter under his breath, but by then, I was too shocked by the news to respond to them.

The headline alone was a shocker.

"Two dead bodies found near the mountains, one injured and taken to the hospital. Before passing out, he claimed to have encountered a monster in the woods who attacked the three hikers."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 265-Planning To Catch The Lycan

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Helanie:

"Why aren't you eating anything, Helanie?" Emmet noticed that I had been playing with the fork and knife for the last ten minutes we had sat in a café to have breakfast. We had left the motel and come to a café for a meal before we parted ways for home.

But the news of the monster killing and injuring an individual stuck with me.

"Did you guys hear about the news?" I couldn't hold it in and finally decided to ask them. It could be a coincidence, but it was a very hard one for me to swallow.

The monster killed people, and then I found Emmet injured with a bike mark. But ever since he woke up, he had said nothing. He didn't even mention what happened last night. I didn't ask either because I felt like if I did, Norman would say something to ruin the atmosphere or maybe make Emmet feel uncomfortable with my questioning about his whereabouts.

But now I wanted to know if Emmet knew anything. Could it be that Emmet came across the same monster? But the monster was in the rogue community. Why would Emmet go all the way to the mountains to transition?

"What news?" Norman was quick to raise his head from his pancake plate to question.

"The news of the killings? Two dead bodies and one injured were found near the mountains. It is being said that the injured one confessed to coming across what seemed to him like a monster," I finished, watching as the brothers steadily turned to each other and exchanged quick glances.

"So? That happens all the time in the rogue community; it's why it's called a rogue community," Emmet remained silent, and Norman answered.

"But why aren't you looking into it? It's a monster that did it—" I was shut down by Norman's harsh glare.

"The entire rogue clan is not our problem," Norman hissed back, "You should finish your food. We'll be leaving soon." The harshness in his voice grew, so I shifted my attention to Emmet.

"Did the same monster attack you, Emmet?" I wanted to be careful with my words. But my curiosity grew as time passed. It was not nothing. He went missing, showed up all messed up and lacking blood, as if he had bled a lot, and then woke up to explain nothing.

As I kept staring at him, I noticed him slowing down with his food and clearing his throat. "Not really. There were some wolves." He quickly took a big bite of his sandwich, probably to avoid talking.

"Helanie, finish your food," Norman groaned.

"I will when I want to. I am talking to Emmet right now," I grew so impatient and annoyed with Norman that I raised my voice, and the café turned their attention to us.

Norman looked around and then back at me, eyeing me to be quiet.

"You better not disrespect me—" he warned, but Emmet gently placed his hand on his brother's to make him lower the finger that was pointing at me in a threatening way.

"I went out for a run and encountered some wolves. We had a fight. Don't worry, they were in much worse shape than I was," Emmet reassured me with a nod and finally answered my question.

"You got your answers? Now eat," Norman grunted as he wiped his hands clean with a tissue.

His eyes were so ready to set me on fire. The sheer intensity of his gaze was scary.

"It's okay. She was just worried," Emmet noticed the way I was so unhappy with Norman's behavior and kindly dismissed his brother, snapping his fingers in front of Norman's face to make him stop staring at me.

I didn't speak with Norman or Emmet after that. I could barely eat anything, so we were soon in the car, headed back home. Norman had left his car to be taken home by Emmet's driver, while he was now driving Emmet's car. I sat alone in the backseat.

I received a message from Lamar that seemed to intrigue me.

Lamar: If you are free, can you come to the ground in front of the academy? Our fellows are holding a meeting. That includes, the top seniors and Rayden.

My heart skipped a beat at the thought of what it might be about.

Me: What is it for?

Lamar: About the lycan and the dead bodies that were found in the morning. The students want to take matters into their own hands and investigate. And Helanie! I have a plan. It's time to strike Rayden again.

It was interesting, but also worrisome. How did Rayden decide to show his face in public so soon?

Me: Got it. I'll be there in time.

I slid to the side, leaning over the window as I cleared my throat to speak with Emmet. "Can you please ask your brother to drop me off at the academy? The students have decided to have a meetup to catch up on each other's activities and connect with the juniors."

I didn't want to tell the brothers what the meeting was about because I didn't trust Norman. He would probably crash the meeting since he was so nosy and overly controlling when it came to the students venturing out into the mountains. I mean, I think he wasn't wrong because any students getting injured by a monster would fall under his responsibility. But I still hated his guts.

"Sure," Emmet turned to his brother next, who had already responded.

"Okay, I heard it," he replied irritably, then muttered under his breath, "Why does she act like if she spoke to me, I will eat her alive?"

I didn't respond, but I'm sure if he sits down and thinks over his attitude, he'll figure out exactly why.

The rest of the car ride passed in silence, and when we arrived at the academy, they dropped me off. Lamar was standing right on the road to pick me up. I sat on his bike just to get to the ground. It would also help everyone see I'm not spending that much time with my trainers.

Right off the bat, as we were at the ground and among the crowd, Sage stood in front with the other top seniors, including Arlo, Rudy, and Sumit.

"Now that everyone is here," Sage started but let Rudy, the handsome hunk of the academy, finish.

"We are going to catch that lycan," he declared.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 266-Jenny Still Loves Rayden

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Helanie:

"You all heard us. We want volunteers who think they can join us to catch the lycan," Rudy announced in his powerful voice. "You have half an hour to decide." With that, he stepped away to talk to the other senior leaders.

"This is crazy," I muttered to Lamar, who had been staring off to the side the entire time. I followed his gaze and saw he was looking at Jenny, who stood next to her brother.

"What do you think they're trying to do? They don't even have a plan," I continued, but Lamar kept his eyes on Jenny, whose gaze was searching through the crowd. Her search ended when her eyes landed on us.

She smiled faintly and started walking toward us. Her brother noticed and began following her.

"I think they will get someone in trouble with the lycan," Lamar responded with his eyes showing shine for Jenny.

"Hi," Jenny greeted us, giving me a hug before turning to Lamar with a small nod.

"How are you?" I asked. "Look, about what happened the other day—I hope you've found some peace."

I wasn't sure what I expected, maybe for her to tell us she had rejected Rayden. Isn't that what she had wanted all along?

"I have. He cheated, I cheated—it's even now," she said. But the way she said it made me raise an eyebrow. I was sure Lamar noticed too because he shifted his weight onto one foot.

"Have you guys seen Gavin?" Penn suddenly asked. We all turned, scanning the crowd with our eyes. Sure enough, just as Penn had mentioned, Gavin wasn't there.

Even Sydney and Salem were standing in the corner. That was when I realized Salem had been watching us the entire time.

"Where could he be?" Jenny asked.

"Maybe he's too embarrassed to show up and thinks taking a one-month break will fix his reputation," Lamar scoffed, shaking his head at the events that had unfolded before Lucy's fall.

Since Lamar brought up Gavin's actions, Jenny looked uncomfortable too. Deep down, all of us knew she had played a big role in upsetting and manipulating Lucy as well.

"So, is anyone going to stand with the top seniors to catch the lycan?" Penn asked. He wasn't usually this talkative, but he seemed determined to spark a conversation now.

"We're still thinking," Lamar replied, clearly showing how uneasy he felt.

"Helanie," Penn finally revealed his true intentions by calling my name.

"Can we talk?" he asked. I wasn't sure what it would be about, but ever since his parents had shown their toxicity and hatred toward me, I knew our friendship had become fragile and complicated.

Even so, I decided to step aside to talk to him, partly because it gave Lamar and Jenny a chance to have their conversation. They had been silently communicating through their eyes, and I figured I should give them some space.

"Sure!" I agreed. As I walked away with Penn, I saw Jenny and Lamar stepping closer to each other.

"Um, I don't even know where to start," Penn began as we moved to a quieter spot. "I'll just be straightforward," he added, looking me in the eye. "My family sucks," he blurted out, his lips pressing into a frown.

"Of all the mean things you could've said about me, I didn't expect this," I replied dryly. "But you're right—you suck too," I added with a shrug, though I was surprised when he chuckled softly.

"You're cute when you're mad," he said with a small smile. "But seriously, I'm really sorry for how my parents acted. I never thought my mother would end up being like Sydney and Salem."

Hearing that from an alpha was surprising. Alphas usually have a lot of love and pride for their families. But Penn seemed to see through their toxic behavior.

It reminded me of Penn himself. His stories about wearing the blue jacket and partying with Rayden had seemed suspicious to me.

"They treated me horribly just because I spoke up against Rayden's bullying," I told him, glancing to the side to look at Rayden, who was now standing with Sydney. The two of them together didn't seem like a good combination at all.

I wondered what they might be talking about.

"Rayden—I never thought he'd do those things," Penn said. "For once, I even asked my sister to reject him. She had the perfect chance, but then again, she wasn't entirely wrong. It was her choice, and she cheated on him too. They wanted to settle things by being equal."

As he mentioned Jenny's comment about being "equal," it clicked for me—Jenny hadn't rejected Rayden yet.

"She didn't ask for a rejection?" I asked in shock.

"No," Penn revealed. "She didn't tell you? She told me she forgives him and wants to fix their relationship."

It felt like a punch to the gut.

"Which isn't why I'm here," Penn said with a small smile, clearly trying to shift the focus of the conversation. But I was so angry at Jenny that I couldn't hold it in.

"Then why are you here? To manipulate me so your parents can come and yell at me again, telling me not to be friends with you?" My anger boiled over, and I found myself hissing at him.

"Helanie! I'm here to tell you that Rayden won't bully you again. You have my word," he said firmly. "If he does, I'll be the first to stand against him. And as for my parents—they'll keep their distance from you too."

Penn leaned closer and spoke softly, but I couldn't bring myself to trust him. His whole family was just so messed up.

My eyes wandered over to Jenny and Lamar. Of course, Lamar had already figured out that Jenny had truly forgiven Rayden, judging by the way he was glaring at her. Jenny kept her eyes fixed on the ground while speaking to him, clearly uncomfortable.

"I'm going to sign up to catch that lycan with the top seniors," I said, my voice steady as I made my decision.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 267-Rayden's Apology

Chapter 267: 267-Rayden's Apology

Helanie:

"Helanie, no! You don't even have a wolf," Penn said, stepping in my way as I tried to walk past him toward Rudy, who was sitting on the bench with the others.

"I don't need you to tell me the obvious. I can take care of myself—and that lycan," I hissed at Penn, taking out my anger on him, even though he hadn't done anything wrong to deserve it.

Still, he wouldn't let me pass. However, my attention was quickly drawn to Jenny walking away from Lamar. She headed straight toward Rayden, who was now approaching Penn and me.

"Hey," Rayden greeted us, a strained smile on his face. Lamar joined us quickly. "Helanie, I'm really sorry for all the bullying and how things turned out," Rayden continued. He then casually wrapped an arm around Jenny's shoulders, and she meekly leaned into his chest.

So after sleeping with Gavin and ruining his relationship, then sleeping with Lamar and wrecking his reputation for being with an alpha's mate, she was now back with Rayden? Her abusive boyfriend and mate?

"How about you just stay away from Helanie?" Lamar, clearly furious, stepped up and gestured for Rayden to back off.

"I'm not going to hurt her with my words," Rayden said, placing a hand on his chest theatrically and then gently running his fingers through Jenny's hair. It was obvious that, even though he'd lost before, he thought he'd won the ultimate prize by getting his mate back.

"And I'm not here to cause trouble either," Rayden continued. "I was going through a rough time. Seeing Jenny with you two and then finding out she'd slept with Lamar left a bitter taste in my mouth about Helanie. I just assumed she must have convinced Jenny that I was a bad mate—like girl friends sometimes do, giving unnecessary advice. I'm not saying Helanie was wrong, but I lost control."

He paused, and Jenny lifted her head from his chest to look up at his face.

"But today, I'm making this promise to my beautiful mate that I'll change my ways," Rayden whispered, lowering his head to kiss Jenny on the lips. It was such an uncomfortable sight.

Lamar even had to look away, closing his eyes. It wasn't fair. Jenny shouldn't have played Lamar like that.

"Anyway, that's all I wanted to say," Rayden added. I kept my eyes on him, then glanced at Lamar, silently signaling him not to respond.

"If that's what you're committing to, I'll appreciate it. I just want to finish this academy in peace," I said calmly, my tone much more relaxed than I felt inside.

"I will. In fact, I heard you don't have a wolf, so I'll give you as many tips as I can to help with that condition," Rayden offered.

The mention of possibly awakening my wolf caught my attention, making my ears perk up.

"Really?" I asked, quickly toning down my smile when I noticed Lamar narrowing his eyes at me.

"Yeah, I promise," Rayden said, closing his eyes to flash a charming smile. "I'm trying to be a better man now."

He finished, and Jenny looked absolutely delighted to be in his presence.

"What were you guys talking about before we got here?" Jenny asked, breaking the awkward silence that had settled after Rayden's apology. Lamar still looked upset, and nobody else was speaking.

"I wanted to sign up to catch the lycan," I mumbled in response, not wanting to call Jenny out in front of everyone for going back to Rayden.

"Wait, but—" Jenny started, then stopped, probably realizing she didn't want to upset me by questioning my decision.

"I was saying the same thing to her—that she shouldn't," Penn added, clearly still trying to make his point. Lamar lingered nearby, quiet but visibly uncomfortable.

"But I want to do it. It'll help me find my strength," I said, keeping my tone calm but resolute.

"I think Helanie is right," Rayden suddenly chimed in, surprising everyone. Even I was taken aback—was he serious about his apology?

"Rayden, it's not safe for her, okay?" Lamar finally spoke, his frustration evident. I turned to him, giving him a look that clearly said I didn't want him interfering again. I had made up my mind.

"What? I'm saying this for your sake—what's wrong with you?" Lamar muttered under his breath, though it was loud enough for everyone to hear.

"It'll be safer for her. I'll sign up too," Rayden declared, catching us all off guard. "If anything happens, I'll make sure she's safe, okay?"

"You'd do that for me?" I asked, shocked. But out of the corner of my eye, I saw Jenny's expression shift.

"Yes, just for Jenny's sake," Rayden clarified, glancing at her. "You're her friend, and I want to do the right thing so that one day she can say, 'Hey, my mate is a good guy.'" He joked, clearly trying to reassure Jenny that his actions weren't about me.

"See? He's not that bad," Jenny joked, making me snort a small laugh.

"I'll sign up too, then," Penn and Lamar both said at the same time.

It was getting late, and people were either leaving or heading over to the top seniors to sign up. Since I'd made it clear I wasn't going to back down, no one argued with me anymore. Besides, with all the guys vowing to protect me, I figured I'd be fine.

"Hey," Penn took the lead, addressing the top seniors. "We'd like to sign up."

As he spoke, I noticed Sage glancing at me briefly before looking back down at the page in her hands to write our names.

"So, it's you guys, those two sisters, and the top seniors. Everyone else is a bunch of cowards," Sage said, rolling her eyes as she read off the names.

I wasn't sure about Arlo, though. He'd been glaring at me the whole time, probably still angry that I got his friend Riri expelled. But that was her fault.

Now I had to deal with Lamar, who seemed like he'd been waiting for a chance to talk to me alone.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 268-My Seductress Cousin

Chapter 268: 268-My Seductress Cousin

Helanie:

"I can't believe you did that. Don't you know Rayden would rather kill you in the deep mountains than help you?" Lamar hissed, just as I had expected.

"You think it will be that easy for him to kill me? Lamar, I will be fine. Besides, you and Penn will be there, and so will Sage," I said, but it seemed to upset Lamar even more.

"Since when did you start trusting Penn? Don't you remember the claims he made about wearing the jacket—" he could go on and on, so I had to interrupt.

"Lamar, if we started accusing everyone, we'd go nuts. As for Rayden, he already got his punishment. And yes, we'll punish him more, but right now, I want to strengthen my powers and wake up my wolf," I argued, feeling bad because I was worried somebody might hear us.

"Huh? And Rayden will help you with it?" Lamar almost yelled before calming himself down. Then he added, "Ugh! You know, Jenny didn't reject Rayden? I'm so confused why she didn't. Our whole purpose for that humiliation was to hit him with a rejection so his pain would double," he complained, but I had already made it clear to Jenny that I wasn't going to question her choices.

"I don't know. It's a mate thing. Put yourself in her shoes. She cheated too, so—" I shut up when Lamar narrowed his eyes at me.

"Helanie, you're speaking like a different person right now. I can't believe it was so easy for them to soften you," he sounded so disappointed in me, and that hurt.

I didn't want our friendship to be ruined, but he needed to understand and trust me.

"Lamar, I'm not softening toward them. I just believe it would be much better if Rayden just left me alone. I don't want so many people coming after me," I almost whispered, avoiding making eye contact with Lamar since he kept glaring at me like I'd said something outrageous.

"Helanie—" I finally took a deep breath and responded with a serious look.

"They don't come after you, Lamar. They're always after me. They try to take me down. And if I don't get them off my back, they'll go digging through the packs for my records. Then what? They'll find the truth, and I'll be in trouble. So please, don't push me into this crazy drama every day." I instantly regretted saying that to him because he looked so hurt.

"Okay, got it. I won't push you into anything, but don't expect me to walk away from this mess you've started. I'll still be on your side and make sure you don't mess up," he pointed his finger at my face and muttered through clenched teeth, "Now go say goodbye to your friends and come to where I parked my bike. I'll drop you home." He was so aggressive in his body language. I wondered if he'd even get back home safely.

He walked away like he said he would, and I stayed in my spot, staring into space. That's when I pulled out my phone to send him a text.

"Hey," Salem's voice startled me as she approached. I turned and gave her a disdainful look.

"I've been meaning to have a word with you," she said, sounding much more polite than usual, but I didn't have time for her.

"Save whatever lie you're here to tell. I don't have the energy for it," I dismissed her with a wave of my hand and walked off after Lamar.

I didn't go back to Penn and the others. I'd meet them soon enough when we were on the hunt for the lycan.

Once I sat behind Lamar, I noticed him put his phone in his pocket. He seemed more relaxed now that some time had passed.

He dropped me off at home and rode away. As I walked up to the porch, I raised my head, not really thinking about anything, and caught sight of something in the window by the front door. I had to squint to make sure I wasn't imagining it.

It was my mother.

She was watching me. The moment she noticed I had caught her, she quickly stepped back. I rushed to the door and got inside, but she was nowhere in sight. Was she checking on me to catch me making mistakes?

"You seem weak now. Please, have some cookies," a voice called out, raspy and familiar. I knew it was Charlotte. She always spoke that way when she was trying to be extra persuasive.

But who was she trying to convince to eat cookies? Out of curiosity, I crept toward the kitchen and peeked inside.

There she was, standing in a blue gown, talking to none other than Maximus.

"I'm not really in the mood for anything sweet," Maximus said, leaning back from the cookie plate she was holding so close to his face, it looked like she might smash it into him if he didn't take one.

"Then I'll cook you something else. Tell me what you'd like to eat," she insisted, putting the cookies down and stepping in his way as he tried to leave the kitchen.

"I'll cook something for myself," he replied, his voice sounding tired and low. I wished she'd take the hint, but Charlotte was known for making dumb decisions.

"No! I'll cook for you. I've been learning recipes online, but I have no one to try them on. Please, let me cook for you," she pleaded. She was probably lying. There was no way

she only wanted to cook for him because she needed someone to test her dishes. She had her mom, my mom, and even Lord McQuoid. She could feed anyone her food. But no, she chose Maximus.

Which reminded me of what Maximus had told me about her hitting on him and trying to sleep with him.

"Charlotte, I don't really want to die. If you want a guinea pig—" Maximus joked in a deadpan tone, but she started laughing and lightly slapping his chest, pretending to be playful.

"Oh my, you're so naughty," she giggled. Then, to my shock, she leaned forward and tried to reach for his lips.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 269-His Flirting Isn't Subtle

Chapter 269: 269-His Flirting Isn't Subtle

Helanie:

My eyes widened, and a yelp escaped my lips, which I quickly covered to avoid making a sound. However, before her lips could crash against his, Maximus realized what she was up to. Swiftly, he placed his hands on her shoulders and pushed her back.

"Charlotte, have you lost your mind?" he sounded irritated, but she just started laughing loudly, pointing a finger at him.

"Oh my Goddess, look at you. It's so easy to tease you. Of course, I wasn't going to do anything. If I wanted to, I would have done it. Come on, now let me cook for you," she said. I was stunned to see how quickly she recovered from his rejection. It didn't even seem to faze her.

She acted nonchalant, even more confident now.

"Say it. What are you craving right now?" she demanded, stepping back into his path and leaning over him again. He was pressed against the counter, leaning back and away from her.

"Tell me, what do you want to eat?" she practically yelled into his ear, making him close one eye and pull his head further away from her. As he did, he caught sight of me standing in the doorway with my arms folded across my chest.

I wasn't jealous.

I was just intrigued by what was happening right under everyone's noses. Did my mother know about Charlotte's obsession with Maximus? Did her mother know--or worse, support her daughter's actions?

"What are you craving?" Charlotte asked again. That's when I noticed Maximus's mood shift.

In a very low voice, he said, "Helanie!"

My posture stiffened.

I straightened my back as I felt the hair on the back of my neck stand up.

"Huh?" Charlotte stepped back, as confused as I was.

"I'm saying, how about Helanie cooks something for me today? She lives here too, but she never offers to help with anything," he said smoothly, recovering quickly.

Charlotte turned fully around, following his gaze, and locked eyes with me.

Her smile vanished instantly. The look of bitterness on her face was unmistakable as she narrowed her eyes at me.

"She doesn't even know how to cook," she snapped, answering for me.

"Is it true, Helanie? You don't know how to cook?" The Maximus who looked so tired and exhausted just moments ago was suddenly smirking, clearly taking an interest in the topic.

Charlotte was giving me a look, silently warning me to go along with what she'd said.

"Actually, I'm a great cook. I can bake better than anything you've ever tried in a high-end bakery," I shrugged, purposely trying to annoy Charlotte.

She had been getting on my nerves every time she tried to control some part of my life. If she thought her glares would silence me, she was wrong.

"See?" Maximus's smile widened. "She knows how to do everything perfectly."

His eyes remained on me, even as he spoke to Charlotte, who was clearly displeased by his tone.

"Tell me, what do you want me to cook for you?" I asked Maximus as I strolled inside and stood by the counter.

"Hmm, should I start writing down the list?" he murmured sweetly, acting as if Charlotte didn't even exist.

"Okay, you can write down the list. We'll cook together," Charlotte chimed in, eager to include herself somehow.

"You want me to cook a whole meal?" I asked Maximus, who once again ignored Charlotte and kept his gaze fixed on me.

"It doesn't sound like a bad idea. You could cook dinner tonight for all of us," he suggested.

"That's a great idea. I'm ready," Charlotte tried to add, but both of us seemed to brush her off.

"Tell me if it's too much and you need my help," Maximus inquired, batting his eyelashes and not even pretending to be subtle.

Charlotte stood beside us, watching like an over-attentive observer.

"I'll go tell my mom that we're the ones cooking tonight's dinner," she suddenly announced and rushed off, almost as if her tail were on fire. I was sure she'd go complain about me to her mother.

As she disappeared, I sighed. "You know she's going to get me in trouble now, don't you?"

"I'll stay here the whole time. Let's see who dares trouble you tonight," he whispered huskily. Then, leaning closer, he quickly planted a kiss on my shoulder.

My body jolted, and I instinctively stepped back, putting some distance between us.

"Hey, don't be so obnoxious," I warned him, though there was a hint of shyness in my tone.

"Why not? I can be anything with you, and you won't judge me, right? Just like you can be anything with me--or anyone," he whispered, his dramatic words making me roll my eyes.

"Okay! Give me the list so I can start cooking," I extended my hand. Instead of writing it down on a piece of paper, Maximus did something bold once again.

He pulled out a pen and started writing on my hand. At first, I felt uncomfortable, even trying to pull my hand away because I was afraid someone might walk in on us. But when he held my hand steady in his, I felt a strange warmth from his touch.

I frowned while he happily started jotting down on my palm. I wasn't supposed to feel his touch like that. But it was comforting, and it made me wonder about what he had claimed to me about being mates.

However, I quickly shut down those thoughts when I recalled that he felt nothing but my pheromones messing with him.

I could have told him, but I wouldn't tell anyone about my weaknesses. The same way if I had told Jenny anything, she would have shared it with Rayden since she was back with him.

"There," he double-pressed the pen, putting a period at the end. Once he put the pen away, he leaned down and kissed my palm.

That's when I quickly pulled my hand back shyly and warned him with my eyes. But it was all just playful banter. He stepped back so I could take a look at his demands, but that's when Charlotte brought her mother, who didn't see Maximus standing behind the door with the wall.

"Has this girl lost her mind?" Aunt Emma arrived, talking about me to her daughter.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 270-Maximus Served Them With Spice

Chapter 270: 270-Maximus Served Them With Spice

Helanie:

"You!" she stood before me, hands on her waist, and her eyes showing how angry she was. She was so negative, always like that towards me.

Charlotte stood behind her, pouting and looking sad because she faced rejection right before my eyes.

"What is it? Why do you look so mad?" I asked casually, looking down at my hand again. Maximus had made some requests.

"What am I hearing?" Emma demanded my attention, using a harsh and loud tone.

"How would I know? I'm not your ears," I replied, looking up and giving her a smile that seemed to make her even angrier.

The funny thing was that Maximus stood right behind them, leaning his back against the wall and tapping his foot so silently that they couldn't hear him.

"Listen, don't be smart with me. And you're not cooking in our kitchen. Get the heck out of here and go tell Maximus that you're not cooking tonight," she was very stern, using her angriest look to try to scare me off.

Well, it would have scared off the other Helanie, who everyone intimidated. I used to get so frightened when someone raised their voice at me or looked slightly upset with me. I would get teary-eyed and wouldn't even speak up for myself.

Times have changed. I was no longer that Helanie and certainly not scared of any harsh glares.

"Why would I say that? You go ahead and tell him that you don't want me in the kitchen," I argued back, not wanting Maximus to jump in right now. I wanted to handle this myself. I was slowly getting annoyed with myself for always waiting for someone to come to my rescue.

"So that's your behavior now? You think you can take charge of us? You think you can defy me?" Emma yelled, hoping I would back down, but I didn't. I stood my ground and kept watching her with a smile on my lips.

"Remember when I came here for the first time, and you made me believe I should take breakfast for Kaye? You got me in trouble, and then you stepped back when I wanted you to tell them that it was you who had pushed me into Kaye's room. Do you think I'm going to repeat the same mistakes and listen to you?" I spoke in a much calmer tone. I didn't want to waste my energy on someone like her.

The issue with these people is that they think just because they aren't going to admit to the truth, they'll get to fool me over and over again.

They can convince others they're innocent, but they won't be fooling me anymore.

"Then let's see how you get to use my kitchen tonight. You need to get out—" she suddenly lunged at me and grabbed my arm to try to kick me out of her kitchen. But she had only turned to head toward the door when she suddenly stopped.

"Release her!" Maximus ordered, his jaw clenching.

"Oh, Maximus, when did you come back?" Emma let go of my hand and smiled. "I was just telling her that there's no way I'm letting her work in the kitchen. She's like a daughter to me, she shouldn't be working," she was so quick to change her tone and words.

"Hmm, I see," Maximus nodded to himself. "Was it before you were yelling at her about how this is your kitchen and she shouldn't defy you, or after?" He looked her deep in the eye, making it clear to her that he had heard everything perfectly.

Where Emma was a confident player, Charlotte seemed to have lost her composure when she yelped and covered her mouth with her hands.

"I—" Emma stuttered, now that she was caught lying red-handed.

"It's a shame that a woman your age is lying like this. Is this what you're teaching your daughter as well? And who told you this is your kitchen?" Maximus started to get more aggressive with every passing second. He walked over to tower over her, making Charlotte step away and not even stand beside her mother for support.

"It's just that she's a messy girl. She'll cry tonight and tomorrow she'll claim we made her work," there was no end to Emma's lies. She was the type to keep lying until she convinced others she didn't do anything wrong.

"I heard what you said to her, and I also heard your tone. The fact that you keep going on makes me wonder if you have any shame at all?" As he started to get bitter with her, Emma's body began to shake visibly.

"I'm sorry, I won't advise her again—" once again, she made a failed attempt to sound like a woman who was just looking out for me, but Maximus was stubborn. So stubborn, unlike what I had perceived of him before.

"No! You're going to say clearly why you came here to yell at her. Say you were trying to control her because your daughter was upset that Helanie got to cook and she felt left out," he raised his voice, even making me squeeze away from them.

Now it was getting too much to watch. I could feel the intensity of his gaze that he kept on Emma.

"I—I'm sorry. I came here feeling all angry because I didn't want Helanie in my kitchen," Emma quickly admitted, making Maximus nod and then point at me.

"You see, this is how you deal with bullies," his voice was so hostile before he forced a smile when talking to me.

"Now, both of you get out of the kitchen. Helanie is cooking tonight," he pointed at the door, and the first one to run outside was Charlotte. She brought her mother into the kitchen and then left her to get yelled at. Emma seemed to have had a hard time finding her composure again.

She forced herself to straighten her spine and then took very slow and steady steps to walk out of the kitchen.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 271-Cooking With The Devils

Chapter 271: 271-Cooking With The Devils

Helanie:

While I cooked, Maximus stayed beside me. He helped with chopping vegetables and tried to get his hands on the pans. Most of the time, he was kind of in my way. He would excitedly jump whenever he heard what I was doing next.

I never thought of him as being so full of life—full of himself, yes!

That's when Kaye walked by, saw us working, and decided to step in. His arrival froze us both. He stood tall, hands on his hips. My first thought was that he might disapprove of me cooking for them or call Norman to take over the "dirty" job. I guess my opinion of Kaye was low because, deep down, I was still upset about how things went between us. We were both at fault, though.

"What is going on?" he asked, his eyes shifting between me, my apron, and Maximus—who was also wearing an apron, though in a way that made me feel sorry for him. He'd tied it around his waist, leaving the straps hanging awkwardly, even after seeing me wear mine correctly.

"Helanie is cooking for us tonight," Maximus responded with a huge smile on his lips. Kaye looked unimpressed at his apron.

He stepped closer and glanced around, his eyes landing on an apron hanging on the wall.

"I'm going to help, too," he muttered, grabbing the apron to put it on.

I watched him struggle for a bit, holding the straps in the air, his arms stretched wide, his eyes darting around as he tried to figure it out.

"Put these behind," I gestured, but Kaye still seemed clueless.

"There are simpler ones in the shop. Why do you guys pick the most complicated ones?" Kaye grumbled, trying to get it right.

"It's not rocket science, Kaye. Just do it the way I did," Maximus shrugged, giving his brother a look for complaining about something so trivial. I glanced at Maximus and stifled a laugh.

"You're not wearing it correctly either, Maximus," I pointed out, cracking eggs into a bowl.

"Huh?" Maximus sounded genuinely shocked, as if he hadn't realized it. "But we can wear it like this too. You don't know anything—I do. Kaye, wear it like I did," he urged, passing his "expert" advice to his brother.

Kaye quickly handed the apron to Maximus, who claimed to know better. The two clowns stood to the side, arguing and "helping" each other, before eventually coming back to ruin my progress.

"What is this white stuff?" Kaye asked, extending his hand over my head. I didn't see it until I lifted my head and accidentally hit his arm.

The bowl he was holding slipped from his hands, and the flour spilled all over the floor.

"Ugh!" I turned to him, scolding, "Can't you stand on that side like him?" I yelled, pointing at Maximus, who was quietly engrossed in cutting fruits into smaller, similar sizes. That task had worked because he was focused and silent.

"I'm sorry, but give me something to do," Kaye muttered, avoiding my eyes.

"You've got to clean the floor now," I pointed to the mess on the floor. Without any argument, he agreed.

The kitchen's dynamic had shifted, and even the mood felt different now. I was enjoying cooking again. It reminded me of my childhood, though thankfully, the sadness didn't linger long because Kaye was now on a mission to clean everything.

"Stop it! I'm still using that," I heard Maximus complain. I briefly turned to check on them. Kaye, holding a paper towel, was cleaning every little thing Maximus dropped.

"Ugh! Get him off my table," Maximus cried out for help.

"No way!" I stood straight again, refusing to redirect Kaye's attention. I didn't want him back at my station, so it was good that Maximus had his full focus.

They bickered the entire time. Later, I assigned them both the task of cutting vegetables—anything to keep them busy.

I swear, they made me realize how hard it must be to cook with two kids. Especially ones as hyperactive as them.

We cooked for some time, and finally, the food was ready. The two, who had done the least amount of work, looked the messiest. Kaye had flour in his hair and even on his face. Maximus wasn't any better. Because of them, I ended up with some flour in my hair too.

I had to shower and get ready while the maids served the food.

Wearing a pink dress—another one of Lamar's picks—I walked out with my hair still wet. I had only towel-dried it before joining everyone for dinner because the maid had informed me that they were waiting for me.

Everyone was already seated at the table when I arrived. Lord McQuoid gestured for everyone to begin eating.

Maximus and Kaye had also changed into clean shirts. Norman, who was holding a file, set it aside once the food was served and turned his attention to his plate.

I watched as everyone started filling their plates.

Charlotte and Emma hadn't joined us. I heard they made up an excuse about not feeling well. Lord McQuoid and my mother had just returned from a party, so they were probably unaware of what had happened.

My mother gave me a quick glance, her mood souring the moment she saw me. Sometimes, it felt like she tried her best to forget I existed. So whenever I happened to catch her attention, she looked shocked at first, then exhausted.

"How was your day, Helanie?" Lord McQuoid asked, tilting his head slightly toward my mother. I could feel the tension between them whenever he spoke to me.

"It was great, thank you for asking," I replied, grateful that he always made an effort to include me in the conversations and even asked about my day.

My eyes wandered to Emmet next, who was excitedly examining the food.

Emmet was the first to fill his plate. My heart started to race as I wondered if I still had what it took to impress him—and everyone else—with my cooking.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 272-The Other Side Of My Stepfather

Chapter 272: 272-The Other Side Of My Stepfather

Helanie:

I had cooked so much food, and probably that's why everyone was wondering what the occasion might be. Butter chicken, lemon chicken piccata, braised short ribs, and more dishes, along with salads, pavlova, and a creamy fruit bowl for dessert.

Emmet tasted the filet mignon first, and the way he closed his eyes to savor the flavor felt like a small victory to me.

Then he took a bite of the aglio olio pasta, and once again, he closed his eyes and let out a louder-than-expected moan.

"Mmmmmm!"

Everyone turned their heads toward him.

"This is so good," he said with his mouth full.

Mr. McQuoid quickly grabbed some food and started nodding his head nonstop. My mother noticed their reactions and picked up a fork. Her response was even more surprising. She looked shocked.

"Seems like the chef has finally learned how to cook," my mother commented, unable to hold back her praise.

Maximus pointed to his lips, signaling me to stay quiet and not reveal the truth just yet.

Maximus and Kaye obviously enjoyed the food since they were there when I was cooking. Slowly, their eyes turned toward Norman, who wasn't paying much attention to what he was eating.

He had a file open right next to his plate, and he was engrossed in it. His fork reached his mouth as he absentmindedly took a bite. It was almost as if he froze for a moment. He stared at the fork and then at the food on his plate.

He started chewing more carefully now. He took another bite, and his eyes slowly closed.

"Ummm," he murmured, frowning slightly.

He reached for the aglio olio next, then tried the other dishes. Soon, he filled his plate with a little bit of everything.

"Mrs. White cooked this food?" Norman asked, looking up at Maximus.

"Yeah," Maximus lied.

Mrs. White was an elderly maid who had been with the family for years. She was mostly assigned to work in the kitchen alongside the other chefs. She was probably in her mid-seventies and had a deep love for cooking.

"Okay, someone should tell her this is amazing, so much so that I might end up eating her fingers too," Norman said. For someone terrible at giving compliments, he definitely meant it as praise.

"That would be odd," Kaye remarked. "By the way, Mrs. White didn't cook."

Norman looked up, waiting for his brother to explain. "Helanie did," Maximus revealed, and Norman's expression changed instantly.

"Ahem!" Norman coughed, grabbing his glass of water. "Why did she cook?" he asked, directing the question to no one in particular.

"Because I asked her to," Maximus replied casually, enjoying his meal.

"Oh! Well, it's... umm... delicious," Norman said, not even glancing in my direction as he complimented the food. I couldn't help but think he saw me as an enemy, like a child would after an argument. He was so awkwardly weird. At least he was eating now.

"How is it, Ursula?" Lord McQuoid suddenly asked my mother.

I had guessed my mother might have told Lord McQuoid that she didn't want to talk to me, which is probably why no one reacted to her ignoring me earlier. But this time, Lord McQuoid pulled her right into the conversation.

She uncomfortably swallowed her food and gave a small nod. "It's good," she said quietly. Her voice was low, and her eyes stayed fixed on her plate. "I didn't know she—hmm," she started but stopped herself, focusing on her food. She still refused to look up.

"Helanie, you keep impressing me with your skills. When you first came here, you seemed clueless. But watching you grow makes me proud of you," Lord McQuoid said.

Those were the words my mother should have said, but instead, she just kept eating.

"Thank you so much. Your sons helped a lot too," I replied, which made Emmet and Norman look up. I didn't want to put Maximus or Kaye in a tough spot, but I was just acknowledging the chaos they created while helping me in the kitchen.

"They're not just my sons; they're your stepbrothers too. You're part of our family now," Lord McQuoid added warmly. Though he meant it kindly, somehow, that simple statement made us all feel a bit awkward.

"Yeah, we did. I was so cool, Dad," Maximus joked, using a playful tone.

"I was the one doing most of the work, though," Kaye complained.

"Really? These two?" Lord McQuoid teased, making everyone laugh. Emmet cracked a small smile, but Norman just kept chewing like a bull, glaring at me.

I looked at him and then quickly looked away, feeling just as awkward as he seemed.

"You should tell Kesha this to impress him," Lord McQuoid said. The moment he mentioned her name, I noticed Kaye glance at me, almost panicking.

"Umm, no! I was thinking about... umm... taking a break from that topic," Kaye stammered, and his response left everyone staring at him. His father looked personally offended.

"What do you mean by that, Kaye? You're not suggesting something foolish, are you? You've craved attention your whole life, and now that you're finally getting it, you want to throw it all away?"

I hadn't expected Lord McQuoid to react so harshly. His sweet and understanding demeanor shifted the moment Kaye shared his thoughts.

I was surprised and confused by Kaye's response too. Why? Did he not want to choose Kesha anymore? Had he used her like he once claimed he would?

If Kaye thought he could try with me again, he was wrong. I knew he was my mate, but I had vowed never to accept him until I had my revenge.

"Dad, you didn't even let him finish," Norman said firmly, putting his fork down with a deliberate clatter to divert their father's sharp glare away from Kaye. Kaye looked deeply uncomfortable now.

"Did you not hear what he was saying?" Lord McQuoid asked, his tone filled with disappointment.

His behavior left me stunned. A few minutes ago, I had wished my mother would be more like him. Now, I realized it was better not to have someone who controlled your life to the point of airing your insecurities in front of everyone.

Kaye's confidence seemed to sink entirely. I hadn't known that his father's attention only came after he chose Kesha. That reflected poorly on Lord McQuoid.

"He's an adult. He can make decisions for himself. I'd suggest you watch your tone next time," Norman said, casually scolding his father. I was taken aback by his boldness. Lord McQuoid clenched his fists, his anger evident, but my mother gently placed her hand over his to calm him down.

"I was just joking," Kaye said softly, almost inaudibly.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 273-Into The Woods

Chapter 273: 273-Into The Woods

Helanie:

It was awkward finishing dinner after that. We all ate silently, and sadly, Kaye could barely swallow his food. I did notice something, though. Norman would never let anyone hurt or speak badly to his brothers whenever he was around. Maybe he wasn't entirely wrong when he claimed he loved his brothers.

I left for my room as soon as dinner was over. In fact, I was the first to leave because I didn't want another awkward situation to arise. Once in my room, I sat on my bed with my phone in hand.

I had been texting Lamar nonstop and wondered if he had spoken with Jenny after their meeting today.

Lamar: They've made a plan. They want us to join them tomorrow night to put it into action.

I frowned because I had no idea how I would leave the mansion for an entire night. The brothers would never allow it, and it wasn't like I could sneak out with so many warriors stationed around the mansion.

Me: How am I supposed to leave?

Lamar: Talk to Lord McQuoid. Tell him you're going to stay at a hotel or Jenny's cabin. Say it's a friend's gathering.

He was right. That idea might actually work because teens always had those kinds of gatherings.

I guessed the senior members had done their research because they seemed pretty confident they could capture this monster.

But was I ready to face that Lycan again? What about the fact that he was my mate? Why would the Moon Goddess pair me with a monster who was killing innocent people?

I went to bed early that night so I could wake up and get to work. It was the weekend, and starting Monday, I planned to join Maximus for his job.

It was the same as every other night this past week. There were too many howls and wolves around the mansion. I bet it was because of the Lycan, because after 2 a.m., everything would go completely silent.

I woke up early as planned and put on the same pink dress. I left my hair down and only applied some lip gloss. I'd love to have a whole collection of skincare and makeup in the future. I enjoyed watching those beauty videos.

Screw anyone who frowned upon makeup or judged girls for wearing too much of it. Life is so much better when you love yourself and try new things.

I never judged any girl for wearing makeup or choosing certain types of clothes.

"Good morning." I had barely stepped into Lord McQuoid's office on the third floor when regret washed over me. He wasn't alone. Someone else was in the office, his broad back facing the door.

I already knew who it was from the size of his shoulders.

It was Norman.

"Oh, Helanie, what brings you to my office so early in the morning?" Lord McQuoid's face lit up when he saw me. I didn't want to step inside anymore, but I had to since I was already here.

Norman tilted his head slightly, but I couldn't gauge much of his reaction because his face was turned away.

"I wanted your permission for something," I spoke softly, walking until I was standing behind Norman's chair. I noticed him holding a pen, twirling it around his fingers.

"Sure, what is it?" Lord McQuoid asked, his eyes bright and warm. But I hadn't forgotten how his attitude had shifted last night.

"My friends are hosting a small gathering—a party or maybe more like a sleepover—at Jenny's cabin tonight. I wanted to join them," I explained, swallowing hard, like I'd just gulped down a rock.

"Su—" I was pleasantly surprised when Lord McQuoid didn't look upset by my request. But my hopes were immediately crushed when Norman cut him off to object.

"No!" he said loudly and sharply. He placed his hand on the chair's armrest and turned to give me a quick glare. "Don't you realize how dangerous things are these days? And you want to stay in a cabin in the woods?"

He always seemed ready to argue with me.

He could've said it calmly first, and if I argued, then maybe gotten angry. But he went straight to being furious.

"But we'll be fine. Jenny has her guards, and they'll be on watch," I argued, growing impatient. I moved my hands as I spoke, trying to emphasize my point.

"No means no. I don't want anyone blaming us if something happens to you. You're under our care now, our responsibility," Norman said harshly. Then, with a grunt and a dismissive wave of his hand, he added, "Now go. Let us work."

"Norman!" Lord McQuoid waited until Norman finished before interrupting. "She's your little stepsister. Talk to her nicely. And as for you, Helanie, you have my permission. But make sure Jenny brings her warriors and that you all stay inside the cabin."

I smiled, relieved, but Norman clearly wasn't giving up.

"What happened to you, Dad? You're much nicer to her, but you lose your patience with Kaye so quickly?" I was surprised he compared the situations. So, he wanted to take his anger out on me?

"Norman, I know you take care of everything, but that doesn't mean you're my father. I'll still make my own decisions, and you won't intervene," I said firmly.

Lord McQuoid forced a smile at me, though I could tell he was deeply upset with Norman questioning him.

"Helanie! Go ahead, you've got my permission."

I didn't want to stay and listen to them argue, so I quickly sprinted out of the office and went to my room to pack a small bag. I knew I'd need some things.

I quickly informed Lamar that I had permission, and he should come pick me up before Norman caused any problems.

Lamar arrived, and before anyone else noticed or knew I was leaving for the night, I was already on the back of his bike, heading to Jenny's cabin. The woods were right next to the mountains, so we didn't take long to get there.

We didn't speak during the ride since the weather was bad, and we didn't want to make any stops. We arrived at the cabin around 12 pm, just in time to discuss the plan with the top seniors, who hadn't shown up yet. But Penn and Jenny were already on the front porch.

"Best of luck," Lamar whispered to me, causing my heart to beat even faster. I knew he still wasn't okay with me going out in the woods to chase after the Lycan tonight.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 274-A Trap For The Lycan

Chapter 274: 274-A Trap For The Lycan

Helanie:

"Others will be arriving soon," Penn informed us while serving coffee. It was so cold in the cabin that Lamar and Penn had made plans to get some wood for the fireplace. I bet Jenny hadn't been to this cabin in a while, ever since her mate had shown up at the cabin, and I ran out in a hurry. Or, a better way to say it would be when she last had sex with Lamar. That would be awkward now.

"We will be back shortly, okay? Helanie, do you need anything?" Penn asked, putting on his jacket.

"Yeah, brother, go ahead, forget about me already," Jenny joked. However, no one laughed.

"You want something?" Penn noticed the awkwardness, so he went over to support his sister, who smiled and waved her hand in response.

"Okay, we will head out now," Penn said, as he was the one talking most of the time.

Once those two left, the stress in the air grew thicker. We both sipped our coffee, avoiding eye contact.

"This coffee is good," I complimented, sipping again.

"Penn really makes the best coffee," Jenny added with a soft smile, "by the way, I'm so glad things have gotten better between you and Rayden."

She shouldn't have brought up Rayden at this moment. But since she did, I also had a question for her.

"Yeah. Anyway, what about you and Lamar? I thought you two--" I left it unfinished on purpose.

She immediately looked uncomfortable when I mentioned their relationship. "It was a mistake."

Her tone was calm, but the guilt in it didn't go unnoticed.

"I didn't know you were also signing up for the lycan trap," I quickly changed the subject.

"I'll be in the cabin, waiting for everyone. If anyone is injured, I'll help them," she said, pointing to the bag full of towels and medical supplies.

"Oh, okay. That makes sense," I murmured.

A knock on the door broke the awkward silence that had lasted for a few minutes. Jenny answered the door and welcomed the top seniors. Well, only two of them arrived: Rudy and Arlo.

They had their bags tossed over their shoulders as they came inside and checked out the cabin.

"Seems cozy," Rudy commented, tossing his bag onto the table.

"With a little dirt around the corner," Arlo muttered, his eyes briefly scanning me before he walked off to inspect the kitchen.

"We have coffee," Jenny called after him, trying to make sure he didn't make a mess.

"Hmm," Rudy stopped near the bed, but his eyes kept wandering around. Finally, though, they stopped examining the cabin and landed on me.

I hadn't interacted one-on-one with him before, so it felt a bit strange to be under his gaze. I also knew Rudy had all the academy girls fawning over him.

"Helanie!" Rudy said, "I've been hearing things about you. From your friend Lucy to your ongoing mess with Rayden." He wasn't teasing, just mentioning something he had heard.

"It's no longer ongoing. It's been dealt with," I corrected him softly.

"Really?" He tapped his fingers on the backrest of an empty chair.

"You're beautiful," his sudden compliment made my heart race.

"Thank you!" I replied nervously, sure my cheeks had turned red.

He casually pulled out his phone and held it in his hand, leaning down to rest his elbows on the backrest of the chair.

"What's your number?" He was so charming and laid-back that I didn't immediately grasp what he'd asked. The next thing I knew, I was giving him my phone number.

At that moment, Jenny and Arlo came out with Arlo holding two cups of coffee. Jenny seemed upset--looks like Arlo had made some comments about the cabin that had bothered her.

"Where are Sage and those two sisters?" Rudy asked, slipping his phone into his pocket. I'd never had anyone come up to me and ask for my number.

"They're on their way here. Rayden already met up with Penn in the woods. I guess in a few minutes, everyone will be here, and then we can talk about our plan," Arlo explained, his eyes casually shifting to me before a tired look took over his face.

And just like he had said, soon everyone started to arrive. Sydney and Salem being in the same cabin as us was really hard for me. Salem reminded me of Lucy, and it hurt to think that nothing had been done about her situation yet.

Rayden hadn't said a word since he entered the cabin and helped Penn with the fireplace. Now we all sat down in a circle with a big map in the middle.

"We need to bring the lycan to this spot," Sage tapped his finger on the red mark on the map.

"We will all carry water mixed with wolfbane and rose water. Remember, rumors say that the lycan can only be vulnerable when these three things are mixed together," Arlo pointed to the bag they had unloaded from the car earlier.

"We will first make him vulnerable and then attack him. We don't plan to kill him, just capture him in a silver cage to present him to the council. We need to do this for our community," Sage said with determination. I could tell she was really excited to catch this lycan for some reason.

"Now for the last part. Everyone will play a role," Rudy took over. "Sage will be the bait to lure the lycan to the spot where we have our weapons and the cage. Lamar, Sydney, and Salem will hold the chains for the cage and drop it right when the lycan is under it. Penn, Arlo, and I will hold the weapons to attack him," he paused and frowned at the papers in his hand. It seemed like they let Arlo take on this role, because Rudy gave him a confused look before he told me what my role was.

"Helanie and Rayden will be responsible for the water guns."

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 275-The Deception And My Monster Mate

Chapter 275: 275-The Deception And My Monster Mate

Helanie:

"Lamar, don't worry, she'll be fine. I'm with her," Rayden said, noticing all the anxiety Lamar had shown ever since it was announced that I'd be paired with Rayden for the task.

We stood outside the cabin, ready to head out and take our places. It had been a hectic day. I had this growing uneasiness that I couldn't share with anyone at the moment.

I avoided everyone and stood silently with Lamar in the corner. Jenny had been very friendly and all smiles with Rayden the whole day. I noticed the way Lamar looked at her and then how his expression turned upset.

"Let's trade spots," he sternly asked Rayden, who clearly hadn't expected it.

Rayden quickly shook his head in response to Lamar's request. "We've practiced all day and made plans. I don't think it's a good idea to change the teams now."

I knew Rayden wouldn't agree. By now, the others had started to gather around us, curious about what was happening.

"I think it'll be fine. If she's not comfortable, she can go with Lamar," Rudy said, stepping in and clearly annoying Sydney. Salem hadn't shown any reaction that made me think she disliked me since we arrived, but I still didn't trust the two sisters.

"No! I'm fine. I don't want the plan to change," I argued. I didn't want to switch teams.

Everyone immediately looked at Lamar's face, as if waiting to see how he'd react to me refusing his request.

"Helanie! A minute!" Lamar groaned, placing his hand on my arm to gesture for me to step aside.

I followed him, while the others likely started gossiping about us.

"What's going on? Don't you realize Rayden isn't the best choice to stay with?" Lamar voiced his disapproval almost instantly.

I fidgeted with my hands, locking my eyes with his as I firmly replied, "Lamar! Rayden is an alpha. I'll be safer with him."

I didn't want to hurt Lamar's feelings, but he seemed to be struggling with my decisions lately.

"There's no lie in that!" Sydney yelled, making it clear they had overheard us.

"Just so you know, I don't agree with you," Lamar hissed before storming off.

Finally, we headed into the woods to check out the spots. There was a huge tree with a large X marked under it. A silver cage hung above the X, and on the other side, there was a chain that Lamar, Sydney, and Salem would hold.

They took their positions, none of them looking happy. Penn, Arlo, and Rudy armed themselves with swords and arrows, ready to attack the lycan once it arrived at the location. Sage was already marching up the mountains to search for the lycan and lure him down to the woods.

Rayden and I paced along the road, holding water guns. Being alone with him felt strange, and I tried my best to act normal.

"You know, I used to think you were stubborn and selfish. But recently, you've changed my mind, especially after you forgave me. I'm really impressed by your intelligence," he said after a long silence.

I didn't feel like saying much, so I forced a smile and gave him a small nod to make my stance clear.

He seemed to appreciate it—I could tell.

Suddenly, a loud howl echoed through the air, making my heart sink. I knew Sage had encountered the lycan. That was part of the plan. Once she spotted the lycan, she was supposed to howl.

"Hold the gun tight," Rayden ordered, squaring his shoulders. The monstrous howls and heavy grunts started getting closer. Sage appeared, running towards the road in her wolf form, then sped past us.

Then the lycan came into sight. I glanced up at the eclipse, and honestly, it was terrifying.

My hands started shaking as I kept my eyes fixed on the lycan. Our job was to drive it off course by spraying it with the poisoned water.

"Ready?" Rayden asked, his voice full of anxiety and tension.

The lycan looked deadly and was rushing towards us at an unbelievable speed, almost like it was in fast-forward. Rayden stepped forward and aimed his gun at the creature. I followed his lead, staying slightly behind him.

I watched him steady himself as the lycan bared its teeth and let out a howl so loud it froze us in place. Then, it lunged at Rayden. But he was ready.

My heart raced in my chest, and my eyes watered as I braced myself for what was coming. Rayden fired his gun, but the water spraying out had no effect on the lycan.

"What the—" Rayden yelled just as the lycan pounced on him.

I stepped back in panic.

"Ughhh!" Rayden cried out in pain.

I watched in horror as the lycan attacked him. It slashed his stomach with its claws, then grabbed him and slammed him into the ground over and over.

Rayden tried to shift into his wolf form, but it didn't work.

"Fire—fire your gun!" Rayden cried out, begging for my help.

"I broke my gun!" I shouted, running to the side and disappearing into the woods.

"Helanie!" Rayden yelled for me, but I didn't turn back. Why would I?

I had purposely replaced the water in his gun with plain water. Did he really think I would forgive him that easily? After all the horrible things he had done to me, did he believe a single apology would be enough to soften me?

No. I wanted him to suffer—beaten down by the lycan, by my mate.

I ran through the woods with my gun in hand, then slammed it to the ground, breaking part of it.

I wasn't sure if the lycan would kill him, but soon I heard Sage and the others shouting, calling for everyone to come together to save Rayden.

Lamar ran toward me and grabbed my arms, checking to see if I was okay.

"So, you really did it. You're so stubborn. I was terrified and completely against this plan, but I guess I should've known—you can be fierce too," he said, with relief and admiration in his voice.

Thankfully, I had texted him my plan the night before, right before Salem came to talk to me on the ground the other day.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 276-Rayden Points At Me.

Chapter 276: 276-Rayden Points At Me.

Helanie:

Lamar and I knew we had to join the others. They didn't deserve to be attacked by the lycan.

"Everyone, back to the cabin!" yelled Rudy, causing Lamar and me to exchange a brief glance before the terror of the lycan heading our way hit us.

Sage and the others were now running toward the cabin. They started to catch up with us. I saw Penn carrying Rayden on his back, making his way to the cabin.

"Ahhhhh!" Sydney's scream made us all slow down. We all turned at once and saw Sydney on the ground with the lycan on top of her.

It was snarling and howling.

"Sydney!" Salem screamed, rushing to her sister's side.

Penn kept running toward the cabin while Rudy squared up, gesturing for Sage to grab the weapons.

"You two, behind the tree. Hold the chain," Rudy yelled at Lamar and me.

We both realized we had reached the spot where we'd planned to trap the lycan.

"I don't think he's attacking!" I yelled to get Rudy's attention, but he didn't listen. He grabbed the arrow and shot at the lycan. As he fired, the lycan swiped its arm and deflected the arrow.

Now that he was under attack, with Sage stabbing him in the back, he lost control.

The lycan swung its arm and hurled Sage to the ground, far away.

"Hold the chain!" Lamar said to me.

I looked at the chain but didn't move a muscle.

It was too late for us. Lamar took over and dropped the cage on the lycan.

However, the moment the cage landed on the lycan, the monster shoved it off.

At that moment, we all exchanged a glance and realized we'd underestimated its strength and power.

The lycan must have been provoked by everyone attacking it, but now it was lashing out at anyone in its path.

Even with Rudy firing an arrow at the lycan, it leaped at Rudy and knocked him to the ground.

"Lamar, get away from the tree!" I yelled the moment I saw the lycan trying to move toward the side of the tree.

I even ran to the front and grabbed a sword from the ground in case I needed to defend myself.

I sprinted behind the lycan, positioning myself to stab him in the back, but my hands started to shake.

All I could think about was the night I had felt the mate bond with him.

As I hesitated, the lycan became aware of me standing behind him and turned to face me.

He snarled even louder and charged at me. My hands trembled, my ears rang. I should have attacked—just enough to distract him—but I couldn't do it.

Even though the lycan in front of me was a monster, I couldn't bring myself to hurt him because he was my mate.

He growled, saliva dripping from his mouth with every step he took closer to me.

I tripped onto my back and began crawling backward.

The lycan stared at me but then got distracted by the noise behind him.

"Hey, asshole! Why don't you come after us?" Rudy yelled, waving his hands in the air.

"Or maybe me," Lamar added, standing behind Sage, who had blood all over her face.

The three were busy calling out to the lycan. But there was a strange calmness that came over him as he stood in front of me.

Instead of attacking anyone again, the lycan spun around and sprinted off. Just like that, he disappeared.

We were all in shock. Our bodies hurt, and those who were wounded were too scared to shift, unsure if the lycan was still nearby.

"You alright?" Rudy asked, walking toward me, breathing heavily and rubbing his head with his hands.

"Yeah," I replied faintly. He had only just reached me when Lamar appeared, almost shoving him aside to hold out his hand to me.

I took Lamar's hand and forced myself to stand.

I was in excruciating pain. My knees felt like they could give out at any moment. Salem appeared with her sister by her side. They both looked scratched up too.

"We should head back now," Sage said. Rudy had walked over to stand beside her.

"Let's go," Rudy agreed but stopped suddenly, turning around to look for something.

"What is it?" I asked, noticing his body tense up.

"Where is Arlo?" Rudy questioned, worry clear on his face.

"Shit! I haven't seen him in a while," Sage said, sounding worried. I could tell the top seniors were already feeling guilty about the plan that had completely backfired.

"Okay, listen. Everyone split into groups of three and look for him. We'll meet back here in an hour," Rudy decided, pairing Salem with Lamar and me.

Thankfully, Salem didn't bother us much as we wandered around. Lamar and I weren't putting much effort into finding Arlo. I wasn't a fan of his.

An hour later, we returned to the meeting spot and found Rudy and Sage emerging from the woods. Sydney followed behind them with none other than Arlo.

"Where was he?" Lamar asked. Arlo quickly looked down, avoiding eye contact.

"Climbed a tree to hide," Sage said, rolling her eyes, mocking Arlo because he never missed a chance to mock others.

"I wasn't hiding. I was trying to get a better view," Arlo snapped, walking ahead of us so no one could see his face.

"Of what? Your cowardice?" Sage retorted.

I understood the dynamic of the top seniors—they weren't friends at all. And with Submit skipping the hunt, I wondered if they would tease him too for backing out.

We made it to the cabin, where chaos had erupted. Jenny was tending to Rayden, who looked like a complete mess.

I didn't expect to walk into so much blood all over the floor.

"What the—" Rudy muttered, shock evident in his voice.

"Where have you all been?" Penn yelled, rushing to the bathroom to wet a towel. I also found out that Penn had passed out upon entering the cabin. Hence Jenny gave him aid first.

"We got caught up. Let's grab more towels," Rudy said, joining Penn. Even though they were injured too, they wanted to help.

I slowed down and made my way to Rayden on the bed. He was groaning in pain.

As he opened his eyes, he grunted, "You! You didn't help me."

He raised his hand to point at me, and fear gripped me. I stepped back and bumped straight into Salem, who had probably overheard what he just said.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 277-I Made My Stepbro Angry

Chapter 277: 277-I Made My Stepbro Angry

Helanie:

I nervously paced on the front porch, rubbing my hands together. Rayden had passed out, but that didn't mean he wouldn't wake up and point a finger at me again.

I guess I didn't think this through. My hatred for him had gone so far that, in that moment when I saw Jenny with him, I couldn't think of anything but getting his ass beaten up by the lycan.

"We've called the brothers. The others didn't pick up, but Trainer Norman did," Lamar said as he stepped outside to update us on Rayden's condition.

My heart was racing in my chest, leaving my mind blank.

"Norman is going to eat me alive," I muttered, noticing how Lamar always narrowed his eyes when I spoke so casually about the brothers.

"This is why I didn't like this plan. Or at least I should've been the one to betray Rayden on the road," Lamar whispered in my ear, making sure no one else could hear.

"No! It had to be me. He would've never gone with you," I replied firmly.

"He trusted me, and because he thought I was weak, he let his guard down. That's when I could stab him in the back with my plan," I explained, though worry and anxiety were now eating me alive.

"Trainer Norman will bring help," Lamar added. We were all on edge. Some of us had suffered serious injuries, while others had minor bruises.

My back ached, and I could feel blood dripping down it. I must have scratched it or had something stuck in it when I fell fighting the lycan. But I didn't want to see a doctor. I wanted to feel this pain, so next time, I wouldn't make any mistakes.

"Helanie, you should go inside. It's getting cold out here," Lamar urged again, but I couldn't bring myself to move. It was around 4 a.m., and none of us had rested. Jenny had helped treat everyone else's injuries, but Rayden remained the main concern. He was bleeding heavily, and the fact that it had taken us so long to reach the cabin only made things worse.

"I'm fine," I said, waving him off. Still, Lamar stubbornly took off his jacket and draped it over my shoulders, knowing I wasn't going inside. I didn't want anyone to look at me and start asking questions. I was afraid I wouldn't be able to lie convincingly.

And then, as if things couldn't get any worse, I saw Norman appear with his men behind him. He was walking briskly toward the cabin, his tall and broad figure looking as intimidating as ever.

He wore a wrinkled gray shirt and looked exhausted and tired, yet he still exuded authority.

He raised his head and narrowed his eyes as he looked at me. Then, he sped up, racing onto the front porch and grabbing my arms.

"Are you okay? Did you get hurt?" he asked, his voice full of anxiety. For a second, I couldn't even respond.

"Helanie, are you—is she hurt?" he shifted his gaze from me to Lamar, asking him this time.

"She's fine," Lamar replied just as someone else came outside. I didn't even turn around to see who it was because Norman was holding me so tightly.

"Professor Norman, Rayden—his wounds are—he's bleeding a lot," Salem announced, causing Norman to gradually release me and compose himself.

"Oh yes, you mentioned that on the call," Norman said, running a hand over his forehead.

He shot me a quick glance before turning to Lamar. "Take care of her. I'll be back in a minute," he instructed, as though I might vanish if he didn't. Then, he walked inside, and I remained where I was, unable to go back in.

His men followed him in, as they needed to carry Rayden to the hospital. Now, it was just me and Salem, as Lamar had gone inside to check on things and ensure no one blamed me for anything.

"Look—," I started, recalling what Rayden had said in front of Salem.

"I didn't hear anything," Salem cut me off firmly. "It wasn't your fault. Rayden was stupid enough not to fill his water gun properly."

Her words shocked me. She was taking my side? I didn't understand why. I didn't believe anyone could change so quickly. But for now, I was grateful.

"Carry him carefully," Norman said as he came back out, prompting Salem and me to step aside to make room for his men.

They carried Rayden out of the woods and to the hospital.

"You go with them. Make sure they all get home safely," Norman instructed the rest of his warriors, ensuring the other students were taken care of.

No one even said goodbye.

"Helanie—you're coming with me," Norman finally addressed me, though he avoided making direct eye contact.

"Lamar! I don't want you to take your bike. It's not safe to ride alone in the rogue community," I said, refusing to let Lamar drive by himself.

Since the others had left with the warriors, it was now just the three of us.

"Lamar, you're coming with us. Stay at the mansion for the night. Don't worry about the bike; we'll load it into my car," Norman said, gesturing for us to move along.

We went inside, grabbed our bags, and came back out so Norman could lock up the cabin before we left.

What struck me as odd was when Norman took my hand and made me walk very close to him, as if he thought I'd be snatched away if he let go.

It felt strange holding hands with him. Once we got to the car, he loaded us in like we were pieces of luggage. None of us said a word.

We arrived at the mansion, and Norman slammed the car door shut hard when he got out, as if he was venting his frustration.

"We can put a pillow between us. I have a big bed," I told Lamar as we walked behind Norman, but I didn't expect my words to bother Norman so much.

He suddenly stopped, spun around, and glared at me with fiery intensity.

"No! He will not stay in the same room as you," he said firmly.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 278-Oh Norman! Why So Aggressive

Chapter 278: 278-Oh Norman! Why So Aggressive

Helanie:

"You'll stay in the guestroom," Norman said to Lamar, who nodded like an obedient student.

"Show him the guestroom," Norman told one of the maids as we entered the mansion. She had just woken up and was told to take Lamar to the second guestroom, which was actually on the third floor. Lamar gave me a quick nod of understanding before following her.

Now it was just me. I tried hurrying to my room, not realizing that Norman was right behind me. Just as I was about to shut the door, he placed his hand on it and pushed it open.

I had to step back, letting him come inside without much of a struggle. Not going to lie, I couldn't fight him even if I wanted to.

"What exactly were you thinking?" he hissed, not turning around as he shut the door behind him.

"We wanted to do something for the rogue community," I mumbled under my breath, noticing how Norman kept glaring at me. That was his way of demanding the full truth.

"I..." I stopped instantly when I noticed blood splatters on his shirt. It felt strange, but I took a deep breath and continued, "I left the cabin with my friends—"

I wanted to lie again, but Norman wasn't having it. He immediately raised a finger to silence me.

"You'll only speak the truth now," he warned, his sharp gaze drilling into me.

"Because, Helanie, if I find out the truth from someone else, I'll be furious!" He stepped closer, bending slightly with his hands on his knees, locking eyes with me in a way that made me feel cornered.

He was right. If I didn't tell him the truth, someone else would, and it would just start another fight between us. I had to stay in this mansion for a while, and dealing with an angry, overbearing Norman every day would be a nightmare.

"Actually..." I muttered, lowering my head even more. Having such a big guy looming over me in such a threatening way was overwhelming. "We were trying to catch the lycan."

As soon as I said it, I knew he'd lose it—and he did. He let out the loudest gasp before straightening up. He started pacing back and forth, clearly trying to figure out how to deal with me.

"You!" he hissed. "You wanted to catch the lycan?" he groaned, his eyes turning red. Even his face was starting to flush with anger.

His muscles tensed, and I could see the veins popping in his neck, temples, and hands.

"You wanted to—" he repeated, cutting himself off as he bit his tongue. "Then why are you standing here? Go catch the lycan now!" He grabbed my arm and shoved me toward the door.

"Go ahead, be the hero everyone needs," he demanded, trying to yank the door open to kick me out. But I darted to the other side of the room, avoiding his outburst. I had been wrong to think I'd already seen the worst of him.

It seemed like his anger had no limits. The way he clenched his jaw terrified me, and I quickly turned my back to him.

I pressed my hands over my face and buried myself in the corner of the room. I didn't want him to see me cry, and I definitely didn't want to see his face when it was burning red with rage.

He probably thought I enjoyed getting into trouble—going out into the woods to face the most dangerous monster imaginable. But the truth was, I didn't have a choice.

I couldn't just sit back and watch Rayden bask in his triumph. He needed to be taken down so he wouldn't get to enjoy the satisfaction of making amends with his mate.

Suddenly, Norman's grunting and pacing stopped. The room fell silent. I realized he had gone quiet when I started sobbing into my hands.

"Helanie, I'm angry because you put yourself in danger," he finally said, his voice calmer but still firm. "Don't you understand? My father trusted your words and gave you permission. He would've blamed himself if anything had happened to you."

His tone had softened, but I spun around quickly to question his reasoning.

He extended one hand, resting it on the wall beside me, while his other hand rested on his waist. He waited for me to respond.

"Your father would've been fine," I snapped. "No one would've blamed him. Nobody questions anyone over me. So don't worry about that," I hissed, but my lips trembled, and I soon covered my face with my hands again.

"That's not fair," he grumbled. "My brothers care about you."

A heavy silence filled the room for a moment. Slowly, I lowered my hands, revealing his face.

"It's true," he said softly. "My brothers would've asked our father why he let you go. They would've questioned everyone, and they would've been angry with you too."

His voice had lost its sharp edge, turning unexpectedly gentle.

It was the perfect moment to apologize for my recklessness and end the conversation. But instead, my impulsive self asked a stupid question—a question that didn't even matter to me.

"Why were you so angry at me?" I asked in a quiet murmur.

"I told you. Because my brothers would have been worried about you," he said, rolling his eyes, which only made me want to keep pressing him.

"And you wouldn't have been worried?" I didn't know why those words slipped out, but the moment they did, his body visibly froze.

He lowered his eyes and stared at me with pure bewilderment. It was like I had asked for one of his kidneys. I couldn't figure out why he was taking so long to say something rude—something that would let me argue with him and feel better.

"Is Rayden going to survive?" I asked, changing the subject. I was over it now. He hadn't given me the satisfaction of arguing back, probably because he pitied me in that moment.

I walked to the side and picked up the glass of water.

"Huh?" I pressed again as I took a sip.

He stood frozen in place, not moving an inch, before finally closing his eyes and letting out a heavy sigh.

"Um, yeah. The doctors will do their best," he said, his tone much softer now.

"You should rest. I'll let you know his condition when I get an update," he added. Then, like an eagle ready to take flight, he stormed out of the room.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 279-The Mischievous One Named Helanie

Chapter 279: 279-The Mischievous One Named Helanie

Norman:

I made it to the exit, and once out of her room, I wondered what had just happened. She had such mood swings. One minute she was all sassy, and the next minute she was sobbing, then back to acting normal.

That wasn't normal.

She was stressed, maybe traumatized. Her forced attempts at acting normal were probably the reason she suddenly burst into tears.

"That needs attention," I said to myself before walking back to my room and sitting on the couch in the dark. I hadn't slept in weeks. My body was always tense and restless. The only thing that hurt me the most tonight was that Helanie worked with the others to capture the lycan.

Did she hate the lycan?

Did she see the lycan as an enemy? That wouldn't be good.

I sighed, checking my phone for updates on my brothers. They were headed to the hostel to stay the night there—both Kaye and Maximus.

As for Emmet, the first thing I did after transitioning back to my human state was check on him. I had to carry him to his room and lay him down after taking care of his wounds. He will wake up feeling disappointed and sad. Once he finds out that Helanie was part of the group that tried to capture the lycan, I bet he will feel even more betrayed.

It was already morning, and I had a feeling Helanie would be anxious to know if their stupidity had led to Rayden dying.

I joined my dad early in the morning while Helanie and the guests were still sleeping. I was sure they would stay asleep for a while.

"Tell me what happened in the woods?" my father asked. He had heard about it from the doctors, and even the parents of the top seniors had reached out to apologize.

"It was just kids being kids. You know how teenagers these days are—curious," I said, trying to avoid the topic.

"But still—I want to know. Did Helanie really go into the woods to catch the lycan?" There was a hint of sadness in my father's voice. Not quite sadness—more like disappointment.

"I'm beginning to wonder if her mother sees through her. How can someone—" my father bit his tongue, trying to control his emotions.

"That's not fair. To Helanie and everyone else, the lycan seems like a danger. Besides, it wasn't Helanie's idea to go into the woods." For the first time, I lied for her.

I didn't know why or what had gotten over me, but I decided to take her side. This could have been the perfect moment to tell my father about her, make him emotional, and paint Helanie in a negative light.

But why couldn't I?

I could finally get rid of her.

"And you wouldn't have been worried?"

I recalled the way she had asked me that question, and my heart skipped a beat once again. Why did she ask me that?

Was she expecting something more than just sympathy from me? Her little hands had covered her face, and when she pressed her face against the wall, didn't she look too adorable?

Like an innocent bird, exuding nothing but purity?

"No!" I shook my head to stop myself from thinking like that and turned my attention back to my father.

"What happened to you?" Dad inquired, looking worried.

"Oh! I mean, no! She didn't go into the woods to capture the lycan. The top seniors picked her because of her abilities. But, Dad—" I closed my eyes, knowing what I was about to say next should not reach Helanie or anyone else's ears, or they might suspect something, "she had the chance to attack the lycan, but she didn't. She had the weapon in her hand, but she didn't strike."

I couldn't believe myself right now.

Were those few words spoken by Helanie enough to soften me?

"And you wouldn't have been worried?"

Why couldn't I stop thinking about those words and the way she said them? She wanted my attention. Was she feeling something for me? Why were her expectations so high? That question must have meant a lot to her for her to ask it. And then, as if to cover her emotions, she engrossed herself in the glass of water.

"Dad, my point is, I was wrong about Helanie before. She's not wicked—she's just a teenager trying hard to become something on her own," I finished, my gaze shifting to the ones entering the room.

Kaye and Maximus stood with their arms folded, making me roll my eyes at them. I knew what was coming—they were going to roast me for finally admitting I had misjudged Helanie.

"We've been saying that," Maximus said, walking with difficulty. Kaye had bandages on him as well.

"Easy!" I held Maximus' hand and helped him sit down, while Kaye reassured me he was fine.

"I'm fine," Kaye said, but his tone was meant to silence my concern since I kept checking on him. He'd gone wild last night, and I knew why.

"Is she okay?" Kaye asked first, referring to Helanie.

"She's fine, sleeping," I replied.

"Are you sure? She had some action in the woods—she must've hurt herself, too," Kaye muttered under his breath, though clearly loud enough for us to hear. He wanted reassurance that she was okay.

"As far as I know, she's fine. Any news on Rayden?" I asked, glancing at Maximus, whose jaw clenched.

"Yeah, sadly, he didn't die," Maximus uttered, his tone full of disdain. He'd grown an open dislike for Rayden, and so had Kaye.

"His death would've been good news to us," Kaye commented bluntly. "Anyway, he's fine, but he wants to speak with the council and his parents. He claims someone from the group betrayed him. So far, we haven't allowed anyone near him because he's still

healing, but I'm sure they'll reach him soon, and he'll give his statement." Kaye seemed just as disturbed as I was by Rayden's claims.

"Yeah. You know what? You two rest. I'll go meet Rayden." I had a bad feeling about this. I needed to be the first to know who he was going to blame for his condition.

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 280-Scared Like A Little Kitten

Chapter 280: 280-Scared Like A Little Kitten

Norman:

After speaking with my brothers, I was already on my way to the hospital in the nearest pack to check on Rayden before anyone else did. His family would already be on the way.

I reached the hospital in time and joined him in his private room, where he had been resting ever since he woke up. He looked like a mess, but since he had woken up, once he gained some strength, he would be able to transition and heal perfectly.

"He is doing much better. Being an Alpha really helps," the doctors said, and I gave them a dramatic nod.

"I'll have a word with him," I gestured at the doctor to leave us alone. Once he left, I adjusted my collar and looked around for a chair.

There was a chair on the side, but it reminded me of the one that broke the other night. I remembered falling and Helanie losing her mind, laughing shamelessly. She could be a bit too much at times.

"How are you now?" I asked the question just for formality. It would be rude to immediately ask him what he was planning to tell the council.

"I am... alive," he muttered, his eyes fixed on the ceiling. Of course, he looked traumatized. Coming across a Lycan and then getting his body torn to pieces must have been excruciating.

"Hmm, Rayden, I heard what happened. I'm upset that you students thought going into the woods and risking your lives for others was your responsibility. I'm also disappointed that none of you came to me first to talk about your plans. The only reason we trainers

make rules is for your own safety," I said, waiting for the right moment to ask the right question.

"We might have succeeded if my water gun hadn't been replaced. Somebody sabotaged the plan," he spoke with difficulty, closing his eyes tightly and sounding like he was chewing on needles.

"I heard you've made that claim. May I know who did it? We'll need to punish that person," I said, leaning forward with my hands on the bed.

"It was Helanie!" His voice didn't falter this time. The look of certainty on his face confirmed he knew exactly what he was talking about.

"Helanie sabotaged the plan? Why?" I was shocked, though I had a feeling I would hear that name. However, I thought he might say it just to get back at her for making him apologize to her. But the way he was talking, his eyes told the truth.

"Helanie wanted revenge for... my bullying," there was a slight hesitation in his voice, and he even looked away when explaining why Helanie might have done such a thing.

"Are you sure? Because if you're accusing Helanie, it means you're saying she tried to get back at you by putting everyone else in danger," I pressed, wanting to hear his side clearly. Even so, I already doubted they could have defeated the Lycan.

"I'm not lying. She was with me at the time. Her job was to back me up. When I realized I had the wrong gun, she ran into the woods and claimed hers was broken too," he explained, his eyes turning red with anger.

I listened to him carefully, but I was growing impatient to confront Helanie. Could she really have done that and then acted so innocent back at home?

"Ehm! I will investigate and make sure she is punished if she really did that. You rest now; I'll come see you again in an hour or two," I assured him before walking out. I felt torn, unsure who to believe.

Rayden was under heavy sedatives, so it was unlikely he was fabricating an exaggerated story. But it was also possible he had misunderstood and was accusing Helanie because he didn't want to admit that an Alpha like him had been so badly defeated.

"Bring Helanie to me right now," I ordered my warrior. I needed to speak with her and see her reaction for myself.

The next hour dragged on painfully. I paced around the garden next to the hospital, waiting for Helanie to arrive.

At last, she showed up. She stepped out of the car looking confused and lost, with the warrior escorting her straight to me.

Her hair was in a messy braid, and she wore that purple sweater she couldn't seem to let go of, wrapping it snugly around her body.

"Thank you. Go ahead, leave for home. I'll bring her back with me," I informed the warrior and waited for him to completely disappear. I knew these men loved to gossip, and once words spread, they turned into rumors.

Now I stood before Helanie, hands on my waist and my eyes scrutinizing her intensely. She looked anxious, nervously fidgeting as I stared.

"I spoke to Rayden, and he claims that it was you who—" Before I could even finish, she took a deep breath and interrupted, saying,

"I did. I replaced the water in his gun and then broke my gun while I ran away from him," she confessed. It didn't even take me yelling or scolding her—here she was, telling the truth.

"Helanie, are you saying this under someone's pressure?" I asked, and she lowered her eyes.

"No!" she paused before adding, "If I hadn't, it would have been me in his place."

Her additional statement made me frown. "Rayden has been awful to me. He's been bullying me to the point that... he scared me into joining this plan. I didn't want to be a part of it, but he said if I didn't go with him, he would keep making my life miserable." She didn't even raise her eyes as she explained what Rayden had been doing to her.

"Why didn't you tell me or my brothers about it?" I asked, irritation creeping into my tone.

"I didn't want you guys to constantly deal with it or have people asking why you were showing so much concern for a mere student. Besides, he already told me that—he'd throw me to the Lycan. So... I panicked and did whatever I could to... save myself," she admitted, hesitantly glancing around, avoiding looking back at me.

"I had to do it," she added, a subtle note of trauma slipping through her voice. The agitation she showed puzzled me.

What was it? Why was she so scared of Rayden?

Tip: You can use left, right keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

