

Claimed And Marked By Her Stepbrother Mates

Chapter 281-My Stepbrother Loves Holding Hands With Me

Chapter 281: 281-My Stepbrother Loves Holding Hands With Me

Helanie

He was silently watching my face. I had to tell him the truth but decided to be careful by adding a little lie of my own. I couldn't be completely honest with him.

There were still some of them out there that needed to be found and punished. I couldn't use all my strength on Rayden and not have anyone on my side when it was time to face the others.

"Are you going to get me arrested now?" I asked with genuine curiosity.

Norman looked upset with me, probably even wondering how smart I was to pull off this plan so perfectly.

"First things first, you're coming with me to the hospital," he pointed a finger at my face, his jaw clenching as he spoke through gritted teeth. I was right—he was beyond furious.

"Okay," I nodded and started walking with him. However, the way he suddenly held my hand to lead me to the hospital didn't go unnoticed. It always felt odd whenever he did that, but it gave me a small sense of security.

We reached the hospital and now stood outside the room. His hand had shifted to my wrist, his fingers wrapped around it while mine hung loosely.

"What is it?" he asked, turning to face me.

"Nothing," I lied.

It wasn't nothing. My heart was pounding wildly in my chest. I was terrified of facing Rayden and his wrath.

"Alright then, let's go," he said, opening the door. We both stepped inside, and instantly my heart seemed to skip a beat. I swear I felt a cold shiver run down my spine that made me freeze in place.

"You!" As soon as Rayden's eyes landed on me, he hissed and tried to get up from the bed.

"Easy! No need to go crazy on her," Norman immediately tightened his grip on my wrist, making me step behind him.

I was trembling uncontrollably, so I grabbed onto his shirt while staying hidden behind him.

"I spoke with her," Norman took a deep breath, still holding my hand. "She didn't do it."

A sudden surge of relief went through me when Norman lied.

"But—" Rayden started to speak, but Norman cut him off.

"Let me finish first. My men searched the area and found her broken gun. As for your water being tampered with, you guys used wolfsbane that was already diluted. Everything you got was cheap, so when it mixed with water, it didn't work at all. There's a way to do things, and let's admit it—the plan sucked. Okay? Helanie was there without a wolf, so of course, she got scared. She admitted to me that she ran from you, but she's been feeling guilty ever since. Look at her," Norman pulled my hand and brought me forward, forcing Rayden to look at my face.

"Does she look like someone who did anything on purpose?" Norman asked Rayden, and I noticed some doubt flicker across Rayden's face.

"She didn't do it. You all messed up, and like anyone else, she ran to save her life. She probably thought an alpha like you would stand a chance against the lycan, but she wouldn't." Norman was sharp, using his words to convince Rayden and subtly manipulate him.

"And she wasn't wrong. Fighting the lycan and surviving—that's a huge accomplishment. You've earned new respect in my eyes," Norman's fingers tightened around my wrist, wriggling slightly. He gave me the impression that he didn't like praising Rayden but felt he had to since I had entangled myself in this messy situation with him.

"What are you thinking?" Norman asked Rayden, who seemed lost in thought.

"I guess you're right. I was just so angry that I thought I should blame someone else," Rayden seemed convincingly manipulated.

"But thank you so much, sir, for acknowledging my strength. I was really good out there," his smile brightened at the praise he was hearing.

"Of course. Everyone at the academy will praise you when they hear how you fought the lycan," I noticed Rayden was so thrilled with the compliments that he didn't notice Norman's jaw clenching. But I did.

"Anyway, you rest now. I'll take Helanie home," Norman said.

"Can I have a word with Helanie alone?" Rayden's request stopped my heart once more just as I was about to leave with Norman.

I didn't want to be alone with him right now. I was scared of what he might say to me.

"No!" Norman bluntly and shamelessly denied his request. "Your health is important. I'm not going to let you talk and waste your energy, my best—student," Norman gritted the words through his teeth and forced a smile onto his lips. Every time he mentioned Rayden being a good student or praised him for fighting the lycan, he sounded so sarcastic and angry.

"Now then, we'll see you again. Goodbye," Norman said, spinning around quickly to drag me out of the room. Once we made it all the way outside and to the parking lot, Norman let go of my hand and blocked my path to the backseat of the car.

"He's lying. He didn't fight the lycan. He just got beaten up," I started ranting instantly.

"That's not why I stopped you," he interrupted. "Tell me something—why does your heart lose its beat whenever you're around him?" Norman's question made me gently touch my wrist, and I realized why he always held my hand like that.

He was checking my heart rate.

"Oh! He's just too handsome, so my heart—" I grimaced, unable to finish the sentence. I wasn't even capable of lying convincingly about something like that. Honestly, I wished I could stomp on Rayden's face with boots full of fresh mud. That's how much I despised him.

"You find him attractive?" The man who could easily spot lies spoken by others took my words seriously and didn't notice the expression on my face.

"Oh, I didn't mean—"

He finally understood the look on my face. "Anyway, next time, don't go around doing stuff like this. Come to me, and I'll handle it."

I didn't know what it was about him, but sometimes he was arrogantly kind.

"Okay," I agreed with a small nod.

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

Chapter 282-Meet My Mother

Chapter 282: 282-Meet My Mother

Helanie:

"And now what?" Lamar asked. "What are we going to do now?" We were eating breakfast in the garden. It was lunchtime, but we had woken up late. And then I had to go visit Rayden at the hospital, so I had skipped breakfast.

"Lamar! I want to—make Rayden's life miserable every day," I said. "And I—" My words were cut off when I saw my mother come out of the mansion with Charlotte by her side. The two seemed to be holding baskets, probably to go pick some fruit. They were royals, and they definitely acted like it.

"What happened?" Lamar asked as he turned to follow my gaze.

"Oh, that is the new mate of the rogue king—she kind of looks like you, don't you think?" He scrunched his face and said, causing my heart to skip a beat.

"And that girl next to her is—" Lamar narrowed his eyes.

"Charlotte, she is her—friend's daughter," I replied, shoving a whole spoonful of cereal in my mouth.

"Huh," Lamar scratched his chin and kept examining them. However, the two seemed to have slowed down after noticing me and Lamar. I was hoping they wouldn't come over.

But they did.

Charlotte was the first one to approach us, while my mother lingered around.

"Hello, good morning," Charlotte wore the same fake smile she always used before starting drama.

"Morning," Lamar replied, not knowing the girl he was talking to was nothing but trouble.

"Have we met before?" Charlotte asked, using a sweet tone.

"No! Why would we?" Lamar shrugged nonchalantly.

"Are you—wait! Are you her boyfriend?" I could sense the disbelief in her voice. "Sorry to say this, but did she tell you she doesn't have an activewolf? Did she tell you about it?" It was so bold of her to think she was controlling something about me.

"Charlotte," my mother strangely arrived when I least expected her. "We should go."

It was the stern way she looked at Charlotte that made her walk away from me.

"It's okay. I didn't feel offended. Besides, I'm just Helanie's friend, a family she never had," Lamar smiled at me, tapping the back of my hand.

"Oh! She said that?" My mother's eyes shifted to me and then back to Lamar. "You seem like a great kid. Who are you? What is your rank?"

I didn't like her asking him all these questions. She wasn't my mom, who should know anything about my friends.

"I am Lamar from—" I hushed him down when I interrupted him.

"He doesn't concern anyone," I responded a bit rudely. I noticed Lamar giving me a dreadful look. Of course, to him, I was acting like this in front of my trainer and the rogue king's mate.

"Huh! Well, Lamar, I'm Charlotte. Her cousin, but of course, she doesn't consider us family," her words shocked Lamar. I could tell from the smile that disappeared from his lips. "I mean, you just saw how she treats her mother. Anyway, we'll leave, but here's some advice—find better friends."

She scoffed and held my mother's hand, dragging her briskly after her. My mother was still watching us, even after they had walked away, unable to hear a word we were saying.

"Helanie," Lamar turned to me after forcing himself back to reality, "what was that? She's your cousin—wait, the rogue king's mate is your mother?"

I wish I had told him myself. I just knew Norman didn't want me to tell anyone I was their stepsister since they never accepted me as part of their family. Not to mention, I found it odd too. After feeling the mate bond with both of the brothers and Maximus claiming he was my mate and flirting with me all the time, I couldn't bring myself to tell Lamar or anyone else what my relationship was with my trainers.

"It is—" I bit my tongue, feeling so guilty.

"Seriously? I tell you everything, and you hid such a huge thing from me? I wasn't going to judge you or say anything. Helanie—" The disbelief and disappointment in his tone made me want to dig a hole and bury myself alive.

I really wish I had told him first. But what about my mates? Would I be okay with just being known as the stepsister?

"It was complicated. My mother had kicked me—" Before I could finish, Lamar stood up.

"Actually, it's okay. Save it," he said, shaking his head at me in disapproval.

"Lamar, please, let me talk. I'll tell you exactly why—" I got up after him, but he pouted and shook his head.

"I have to go. I'll contact you about the meeting the trainers held at the academy," Lamar seemed angry or maybe upset with me. I couldn't tell because he didn't stay for long. Before I knew it, he was already briskly walking to his bike. I chased after him, but it was too late; he had already left on his bike. I stood in my spot, my lips trembling.

I hated Charlotte, but it wasn't her fault. It was my fault. I had become so insecure that I couldn't tell anyone a single thing about myself. Everything felt like a secret.

"Hmm, trouble in paradise?" I jumped at the voice from behind me. It was Emmet, looking like he needed some good food. He looked tired, and despite being tall and muscular, he appeared weak.

"There's no paradise. He's like a brother to me," I said. "Actually, he just found out that—you're my stepbrother, and I guess it upset him to find out from Charlotte." I kept my head down while talking and responding to Emmet.

"Charlotte! Always causing trouble for you, isn't she?" Emmet asked, and I gently nodded my head. "Don't worry. Everything will be dealt with soon."

He finished, causing me to frown in confusion.

Emmet didn't stay behind and left. I wanted to go to my room to relax and contact Lamar, but I had other plans too.

I had to visit Rayden when no one was watching. So, I left the mansion, and since it was daytime, nobody really questioned me.

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

Chapter 283-He Won't Stop Flirting.

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Helanie:

"Helanie? What are you doing here?" Rayden seemed shocked to see me coming back to see him. I had heard from the nurse that his parents had just left and would be back in a few hours.

I didn't really tell her my name or anything. I just knew everyone was allowed to come see him now, and since he was an alpha, he was getting many visitors.

"I needed to speak with you," I said, trying to rush through my words. It was so hard to face him, not because I was guilty of being the reason behind the attack on him, but because I hated his face.

Breathing in the same air as him was like inhaling charcoal.

"Okay. What is it?" The fact that he was so casually talking to me after making me his victim surprised me.

He never showed any guilt, though, and I wondered what kind of cold-hearted monster he was.

"Umm, I wanted to tell you—who actually—made me do that to you," I noticed his expression instantly change.

"What do you mean? You said you didn't do anything," Rayden almost hissed as he remembered the conversation he had with Norman.

"That was a lie. The truth is that—," I held my breath, "it was someone who blackmailed me into—doing this to you." I felt like the world under me was shaking. Every time I played a game with him or spoke with him, I couldn't help but have flashes of that night. His laughter was still echoing through my ears.

"Wait, someone made you do that to me? Who was it?" he asked, his eyes narrowing as he looked at my face.

"It was—Arlo," I finished and watched him frown and shake his head.

"Why would he want to do that to me? It doesn't make any sense," he was, of course, not going to believe me just like that.

"That's because he is jealous of you. He wanted you to look like a fool and probably even wanted you out of his way," I said, noticing him zone out.

"Anyway, I just thought I'd tell you the truth because you didn't deserve what happened to you." I could already tell he was ready to throw hands.

"That's why Arlo was hiding in the tree. He knew the plan wouldn't work. He had sabotaged it, but can you please—please not tell anyone? I don't want to be under Arlo's radar?" I pleaded, showing him how genuinely scared I was of Arlo.

"Hm, don't worry. I won't tell anyone," Rayden was zoned out when he said that, "but you shouldn't have betrayed me like that, Helanie." Now that he had finally regained his senses, he was ready to threaten me as well.

"And for that, you won't be spared either," he hissed. It was a clear threat to me that once he got better, he would make sure I suffered as much as Arlo.

"I am so sorry, I didn't mean---," I began to speak, but he shushed me, glaring at me and wincing when his body probably hurt from trying too hard to get after me.

"Just get out of here. I'll see you soon," he muttered, eyeing me angrily. I nodded repeatedly and ran out of the room.

I knew what I had done. He would forgive me, but I'm sure the risk would be worth it.

I left for home after that, and nobody ever found out I had been to the hospital. Dinner time arrived, but I wasn't feeling like eating anything. My back was hurting, and only when I took a shower did I realize the injury on my back had gotten worse.

"Who is it?" I answered the door to find Maximus standing outside my room.

"Why didn't you attend dinner?" he inquired, his eyes narrowing as he looked at me.

"I wasn't feeling well," I didn't lie or hide the truth. I was so uncomfortable that I couldn't help but need help.

"Why? What happened?" he instantly stormed in, making me step back. Once he had entered the room, he shut the door behind us.

"Maximus, I don't think—," I didn't want anyone to find us in the room and have wrong ideas, but there was no winning in an argument with Maximus.

He had already shushed me with his finger to his lips.

"Tell me what happened to you?" he repeated his question and gently placed his hand on my forehead. "Why do you have a fever? Was it because of last night's adventure in the woods?"

Of course, Norman had told him. He looked so disappointed in me. That was the look I got from everyone today.

"I guess," I muttered.

"Did you sustain any injuries that you didn't treat?" Maximus was so soft-spoken whenever he wanted to be.

I couldn't help but nod my head and tell him the truth.

"Hmm, it's okay. I will treat them. Now tell me, where did you hurt yourself?" However, now that he wanted to treat my wounds, I realized it would be inappropriate for him to see my bare back.

"Helanie," snapping his fingers in front of my face, he repeated to me once again.

"It will be inappropriate. I will treat them myself," I excused, stepping back from him.

"Okay, but where is the injury?" he asked again, this time in a much sterner tone.

"You don't want to know." I felt so shy in front of him, especially now that we were in a locked room.

"Why? Where is it?" he raised an eyebrow. "Did you—get hurt on your—," he squeezed his eyes shut as if he couldn't say the words.

"No! Not anywhere there. It's on my back. I got my back scratched up, and I guess it was worse than I had imagined," I was quick to shut down his thoughts. But while revealing the truth, I noticed he had found something else to disagree with me over.

"How are you going to treat your wounds on your back? Let me—let me help. Come on, take off your shirt and show me your injury," the change in his tone as he smirked just a little caused my cheeks to feel heat rush to them.

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

Chapter 284-The Scars On My Back

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Helanie:

"Why are you staring at me like that? Come on, take off your shirt and sit with your back facing me," he insisted, and the way he said those words made my stomach twist into a knot.

"No!" I frowned, "No! That would be weird," I hissed.

"Then let me get a doctor for you, but since it's late and in two hours, it will be midnight, I don't think anyone would come here. How about I ask your mother for you? Do you want me to—" he was so clever, he knew I would never ask for my mother's help. I'd rather let the wounds get infected and die than ask her for help.

"You know I'll never ask for her help, right?" I placed my hands on my waist, annoyed by his insensitivity.

"Hey, don't be angry. I was just making a point. You have a fever, which already means you need to clean that wound. Let me do it. I'm your trainer. I've seen wounds before, and I know how to treat them," he was trying so hard to convince me, but he was missing just one point.

"I'll have to take off my shirt, and I don't want to do that," I groaned, stomping my foot without realizing how obnoxious I sounded.

"You're making it seem like if you took off your shirt, I wouldn't be able to control myself," he rolled his eyes as he commented.

"You wouldn't be able to control yourself," I didn't mean to sound cocky, but I can understand why he thought I did.

"That's some confidence you've got there," he smirked, but soon his expression changed when he noticed I was uncomfortable.

I wasn't being cocky. I just had this bad memory. The minute they had torn my clothes off, they made it clear that they weren't going to stop. I had worn my pendant long before they took off my clothes. They had all the time in the world to stop, but they didn't.

"Hey, you don't have to go entirely naked. Just lift your shirt or turn your back to me," he whispered, using a much gentler tone and no longer smirking.

"Hm, okay!" I don't know why I gave up, maybe because I felt itchy on my back again. I would not take off my bra and would only call for him after I'd taken off my shirt, holding it in front of my body and sitting with only my back in his view.

"You will have to turn around," I said, making a circular motion with my fingers. He was quick to follow my instructions and turned around.

My body was so stiff as I took off my sweater and then my shirt, holding it in front of my body and sitting on the bed.

"You can look now," I uttered. However, I could tell he didn't turn around. Instead, he walked straight to the light switch and turned the light off.

I then heard his footsteps from farther away before he turned on the lamp in the other corner of the room. Now the room was dimly lit. He walked back and sat behind me, with the aid box right next to him.

"I will never make you uncomfortable, Helanie," he whispered. A sudden touch of the cotton bud against my wound made me nearly jump.

"Helanie, this should have been dealt with earlier. It's a huge wound. How did you take so long to feel it?" he continued talking, and somehow, it helped me relax.

"I don't know. I guess I was really stressed out about other stuff," I replied, much calmer now.

"Hmm, anyway—you should—" I found him go silent and still. He didn't touch me with the cotton bud again.

"What happened?" I asked, curious about why he was so quiet, "Is it that bad?" I asked.

"Huh? Actually, I will need to turn on the light to examine it well. It might have caught an infection, but don't worry. I'll treat it well," his voice grew heavy, and his breathing became erratic.

What was going on?

"Oh!" I must have sounded suspicious because he quickly started explaining.

"Actually, there have been some thorns digging deeper into your skin. How did you not notice it?" he almost raised his voice, his tone had shifted so much now.

"I— you can turn on the light," I grew so afraid of the sound of thorns being in my skin that I didn't care about the light. I had initially been okay with him looking at my back only, so it wasn't a big deal anyway.

However, as he got up to leave for the light switch, I stayed seated. He returned, and this time, I found him paying more attention to my wounds. He was cleaning them, but he had gone completely silent now.

After he had applied some ointment and bandaged the wound so that I could comfortably put my shirt back on, he stepped away from the bed.

His body language had changed so much.

I quickly put on my shirt so that I could ask him what had happened. Why did he look so lost and confused?

"What happened?" I inquired again since he kept running his hands through his hair and pacing around.

"I didn't want—to—ask you that. I thought I'd just act like I didn't see it," he uttered, sounding so uncomfortable.

"See what?" I asked out of curiosity. What did he see that shocked him so much?

"Helanie, what are those marks on your back? Those cigarette marks and other wounds—what are they?" My body seemed to freeze, and this weird, tight feeling in my chest took over when he mentioned the marks on my body.

It had been so long that I thought I was born with them. I had seen them so many times that I just forgot they weren't there before.

"Ohhhh!" I slapped my forehead, my body shaking as I tried to come up with a lie. "Those marks—" I let out an uncomfortable laugh. "I used to um—my father—" I sniffled, unable to get the words out. They weren't by anyone else but those alphas.

The next thing I knew, he rushed over and held my arms, pulling me into his chest. Despite being in a state where anyone touching me made me uncomfortable, I found comfort in his arms, to the point where I quickly rested my hands on his chest and started sobbing.

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

Chapter 285-His Sweet Confession

Chapter 285: 285-His Sweet Confession

Helanie:

"He used to avoid me like I didn't even exist. There were times when he could just walk past me—no! Walk through me," I uttered, still sobbing as I spilled my heart to him. Although I couldn't tell him about the Alphas, I did speak about my father and my stepmother.

"Helanie, tell me where they are, and I will fucking kill them in the worst way possible," he said, gripping my hands again. He pulled me slightly away, just enough to make his point, though I was still close, my hands resting on his chest and my eyes locked with his.

If only I could tell him everything. I just couldn't. If I told him about the Alphas and he went after them, I would be asked to provide evidence. Then I wouldn't be able to take my revenge. They'd become vigilant, and I couldn't risk that.

They will never understand the lengths I am willing to go to make them bow to me.

"It was a long time ago. I was very young when I left the pack. I'm sure my dad and stepmother left that pack as well," I lied, my voice steady despite the turmoil inside me.

From what Charlotte and Emma told me, my mother never revealed anything about my father being in the same pack. I'm certain she didn't know herself. The last time she spoke with him, my dad told her he'd take me and leave for another pack to start anew, ensuring she would never find us.

My mother must have lived her life believing my father abandoned the pack.

"I don't hold that anger in my heart for them. But I want to transition so these scars go away," I added, though I didn't mean it.

Those scars were the only thing I was terrified of losing.

I didn't want them to fade until I had exact my revenge. They were my motivation. I owed it to my body to keep them.

"I'm sure you will," he said softly. "You just need to keep believing and wanting your wolf. Show the desire to transition." He paused, placing a hand on his forehead, his expression tightening. He seemed so infuriated, but I could tell he was keeping his anger in check for me. That much I knew.

But I was already regretting bringing up my father. I had no idea how far he was willing to go to find them. And if he did, it would only spell disaster for me.

It was then that I realized something: I wanted my wolf, but I wasn't sure if I truly wanted to transition. Could that doubt be what had silenced my wolf again?

"Promise me something," I said softly, reaching for his hand. The moment our hands touched, I noticed how warm his hand was. Not just warm—it felt like fire.

"Hmm?" He lifted his head from the ground, his red eyes glistening with unshed tears.

"You will not do anything without my permission. I don't want you going after my father. Whatever he was, whatever he may be, he's still my father. I could never bear for you—or anyone—to hurt him," I uttered, though the words felt hollow.

It was true that knowing someone hurt my father would devastate me, but it wasn't as though he didn't deserve it. Still, the thought of him being harmed was too much.

"You really do have a heart of gold, don't you?" Maximus smiled softly, raising my hand to his lips and kissing the back of it. For the first time, I didn't pull away.

"Maximus, why is your body so hot?" I asked after a moment, noticing the warmth radiating from him. Letting it all out while he hugged me had made me feel better.

"I'm fine. I just—okay, hear me out," he said quickly, dragging me over to the bed and gently making me sit down. He knelt in front of me, his gaze steady but filled with emotion.

"I get very possessive over you, okay? I don't know if it's the mate bond or something else, but I just... I get so angry when someone hurts you, upsets you, flirts with you, talks to you, or even looks at you. I never thought I had this in me, Helanie. But ever since I started seeing you differently, I've just felt like—ugh! I think I've fallen in love with you."

My heart thundered in my chest as his words sank in. His confession was raw, almost explosive, leaving me speechless.

"You don't have to feel the same way," he added quickly, as though afraid I'd reject him. "I just needed to get it off my chest. I've been trying—trust me, I've tried my best not to fall for you. But you're... you're incredible. Your scent, oh Goddess, your scent. Whenever I get too close to you, it hits me like the most expensive drug, and I can't help myself," he rambled, his words tumbling out in a flurry that left me blushing.

It wasn't as though I hadn't noticed it too. But the difference with Maximus was that he wasn't my fated mate. I had made no promises about anyone who wasn't my mate.

"And you blushing gives me hope," he said with a pout, his tone softer now but no less intense.

"No! Don't get any wrong ideas. Remember, we're stepsiblings," I said sharply, grimacing at the thought.

"And you are my trainer, and also—" he pointed a finger at me, cutting me off mid-sentence.

"Is there anything else left that makes this taboo? Don't add any more titles," he said with a smirk. "As for me being your trainer, there's no such rule. I'll deal with the rest."

His confidence made me frown and raise an eyebrow at him. He sounded so self-assured, so certain about us.

"Anyway, you should go before anyone sees you in my room," I said, freeing my hand from his and pointing toward the door. I reminded him of the others in the mansion who might be lurking around. If Charlotte saw him here with me, she'd go absolutely nuts.

"Okay," he said with a sigh, but then he hesitated. "At least let me kiss you on the cheek. Please—a goodnight kiss."

His request was so endearing that I almost gave in. Almost. I bit my lip, torn between saying yes and declining outright.

He seemed to take my silence as a yes. Leaning in closer, he gently pressed his lips to my cheek. His touch was soft, comforting, and respectful in a way that made my heart flutter. The fact that he'd asked for my permission only deepened that feeling.

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

Chapter 286-Stand For Me

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Helanie:

Maximus left that night, leaving my heart warm with the glow of his emotions.

I had already gone to sleep but received a text from Maximus about what to expect in the morning.

He reminded me about my first day at job with him. The plan was simple: we'd wake up, get ready, go to the garage to pick up some weapons, and then head to the woods down the mountains. Maximus would test the weapons while I wrote about them in detail.

I woke up early but made sure to text Lamar.

Me: Are you still upset with me?

Lamar: No! I'm fine. Sorry I acted childish yesterday. I should've understood that as a victim, you have so many triggers, and one of them is sharing your life or secrets with anyone.

Tears filled my eyes at how thoughtful he was.

Me: Thank you, Lamar. Your understanding means so much to me.

Lamar: Yeah! I just wish Jenny had understood that too.

Me: It must be hard staying in the motel room where you and Jenny—

Lamar: I know. We had sex all night. On the bed—on the floor—on the balcony—and even in the bathroom—

Me: Okay, stop it. Stop rubbing your amazing sex life in my face.

Lamar: All I need to do is take Rayden down.

Lamar: And I will. There's a meeting in two days where all the students will be gathered at the academy. I'll put a deadly viper in Rayden's locker. Just wait and watch what happens.

I shook my head with a little laugh escaping my lips as I got out of bed to take a shower. After getting ready, I left the room for breakfast.

Everyone was already gone for work, so it was just me at the table.

Or so I thought.

"Mom, I should have woken up earlier. One day I sleep in, and I have to share the table with a stranger," Charlotte walked into view, taking a seat and making sure to remind me I didn't belong in the house.

I didn't even look up from my plate to respond. It was so strange living with them and not interacting at all—except when they threw jabs at me or laughed when I walked past them.

"Avoid her, she's a troublemaker. Eat well, and then get ready. I'll ask Maximus to take you out for shopping today," Emma said as she sat next to her daughter, filling her plate and doting on her. What she said made me perk up.

Maximus was going to be busy today? He must've changed his plans.

"Oh yes, I need some stuff," Charlotte giggled, probably lying. She didn't need anything—she just wanted Maximus and his attention.

I kept eating, ignoring their chatter, though once in a while they threw snide remarks my way.

"Morning," a voice startled me. Maybe because I didn't expect someone kind and sweet to sit in front of me. Charlotte and Emma's negativity had drained me.

I looked up and smiled at Maximus, who was dressed in black pants, a white shirt, and a black leather jacket.

"Excited for today?" Maximus asked, but Emma interrupted him by snatching his plate to fill it.

"Thanks, Emma, but I like to fill my plate myself," he said, taking it back from her and rolling his eyes discreetly—though I noticed.

"Maximus, Mom made banana pancakes today," Charlotte announced, as if they were some rare treat. Those pancakes were made every day, but I hadn't realized Emma cooked them today.

Maximus didn't respond to her, but while taking a bite, he gestured at me with his fork. "All set for the first day?"

It seemed like the question had been on his mind, and he was eager for an answer.

"Yes," I replied shyly, partly because he was paying so much attention to me and partly because he was standing his ground against those two cruel people.

"Excited for what? Did you two make a plan?" Charlotte suddenly got up from her spot, quickly changing seats to sit right next to Maximus as she asked him.

Emma immediately raised her gaze to glare at me, as if I'd caused her daughter to feel uneasy.

"No!" Maximus shook his head, but as soon as Charlotte smiled in relief, he added, "A job isn't a plan. She's starting to work with me today."

Charlotte wasn't great at hiding her true feelings. Her jaw literally dropped, and she stared at me in disbelief.

Emma, understanding her daughter's reaction, decided to help her by confronting me.

"You're going to work with him? Do you even know the kind of work he does? Won't it be too much for you, standing in the woods and watching him shoot dangerous weapons?" Emma started bitterly. "You'll just end up crying after every shot and wasting his time. Why can't you do some work more suited to your skills?" She slammed her fist on the table, and my fists clenched in response.

But I stayed quiet because it seemed like Maximus had something to say.

"And what exactly do you suggest would be a better job for her?" Maximus asked, his voice calm and steady.

I would've taken it as a warning to back out, but the mother-daughter duo seemed completely oblivious.

With a strange smirk on her lips, Emma replied, "She could clean the mansion. We'd pay her for it."

Her daughter let out a laugh, quickly covering her mouth with her fist to make it look like she was trying not to laugh. But the joke was so funny to her that she couldn't hold back.

What bothered me was that I couldn't understand the point of her remark.

"Really?" Maximus grunted, closing his eyes briefly.

"Yes, she—" Charlotte began, but Maximus turned his head to glare at her. The look he gave her wiped the smile off her face immediately.

"Who are you two to suggest what Helanie should do in her home or with her life? Don't forget, you're living here as guests. You don't even have any real ties to anyone here. So next time you interfere, remember your lane," he groaned loudly, muttering every word through clenched teeth.

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

- Chapter 287-Kiss The Snake

Chapter 287-Kiss The Snake

Chapter 287: 287-Kiss The Snake

Helanie:

"But I was just speaking for you. Now, see, you have to take Charlotte out for shopping--," as Emma continued to make her point clear, Maximus's confused expression not only caught my attention but also Emma's.

"Oh, it's just that she needs a few things," Emma laughed like it was something funny.

"I have to? That's quite a strong statement. Anyway, you can take her. Why should I? She's not my responsibility. As for Helanie and this job--," he stopped when I shifted in my seat, ready to speak for myself now that Maximus had already given them something embarrassing to think about.

"I don't mind cleaning the mansion or cooking for money. Every type of work is work, and I respect hard workers. However, it was Lord McQuoid's wish that I work for Maximus, and it's also something right in my field. Don't worry, if I ever felt like crying, I'd borrow your shoulder since this is where your daughter cries all the time too," I said with a smile, which instantly made Emma's face fall.

She looked like she was about to cry. But more than that, she probably would have tackled me if Maximus hadn't been sitting right next to her.

Charlotte pouted, biting the inside of her cheek to keep herself from crying in front of us.

"See! You should learn from Helanie. Every job is respectable. So, I think Charlotte should start working at the mansion, right? Sitting at home doing nothing and picking on everyone is a bad habit," Maximus said with a wide grin, while Charlotte's one lonely tear slipped down her cheek.

"Anyway. Helanie, if you're ready, we should head to my garage," Maximus wiped his mouth and stood up. I quickly got up after him, figuring Charlotte needed some alone time to collect her thoughts--or maybe cry on her mother's shoulder.

"My daughter is always very hard-working--," Emma tried to defend Charlotte, but it was a little too late.

Maximus and I were already out of sight, heading toward the exit. For the first time, he had me sit in the passenger seat with him.

"What are these?" I asked, frowning as I noticed the adorable kawaii notebooks and pens on the dashboard, along with keychains labeled "Helanie" hanging from them.

"These are for you. You'll be writing down the progress on the weapons, so I thought you might like these," he shrugged, making me smile slightly.

Did he really think I was a kid who would enjoy this kind of stationery?

"You know I can write on anything--oh look! A poppit diary!" I suddenly exclaimed, bouncing in my seat as I pressed the poppit bubbles on the cover.

"I knew it," he commented with a laugh.

We made it to his garage and hurried inside to grab the weapons.

"We'll only test two today," he muttered, gesturing for me to grab one of the boxes while he picked up another.

I was glad he was including me, though I wouldn't have minded if he thought I shouldn't carry anything. I wasn't the type to overanalyze every action. I hated being judged for small things, so I didn't want to do that to anyone else.

He drove us to the woods, and soon we were walking deeper into them to examine the weapons.

"So, what are these weapons?" I asked, holding the notebook he had given me.

"It's called the Venom's Kiss dagger," Maximus explained, prompting me to start jotting down notes.

"See these jagged edges? When the dagger is dipped in venom, the silver in these grooves holds the venom securely. When someone is stabbed, the venom causes their flesh to attack itself. Not only that, but with every passing hour, the victim starts hallucinating. They relive memories--some that traumatized them and others they're proud of--over and over again."

His words sent shivers down my spine.

These were some dangerous weapons. If they fell into the wrong hands, the werewolf world could very well be doomed.

"Wow!" I exclaimed.

"Impressed? Wait until you see the next one," he smirked. "Thanks to Kaye too. It's because of his knowledge of herbs that we're able to put together such weapons."

"But where do you guys use them? I mean, do you use them in wars?" I asked, and he nodded.

"Do you sell them to the packs too?" I continued writing.

"No! That's the part that has upset many pack members. They want us to sell them these weapons. But we don't want just anyone having this kind of power. Whenever these weapons are needed, my brothers and I go personally to use them," Maximus

said, giving me a sense of hope as he explained that they don't just give these weapons out to anyone in the pack.

"Now this--," he brought out a large dagger that was shaped like a snake.

"Helanie! This one is called snake's target. Once I drop this one--" he started, "it will come to life. In the next two minutes, it will search for its victim to bite," he explained, holding the snake-like arrow.

My hands were shaking as I wrote about this one. I didn't like snakes. In fact, I was terrified of them.

"How does it find a victim?" I asked, watching him smirk with pride.

"The one who kisses its tail becomes the master. They launch it in the direction of the enemy, and the snake kind of sees through its master's eyes," he said, looking so proud of himself. He stared at the tree for a moment before holding the dagger close to his lips, then turned to me and changed his mind.

"You do it," he offered.

I hesitated for a second, then, with trembling hands, I accepted it. He watched as I kissed the dagger on its tail and then launched it.

As soon as it hit the ground, the dagger transformed into a silver snake.

"No!" Maximus stepped behind me, knowing I would react in fear. He wrapped his arms around me to help me stay still and focus on my target.

I wanted to aim for the tree, but somehow, Rayden's face kept flashing before my eyes.

The next thing I knew, the snake had sped way past the tree.

"What the heck! Helanie, who did you imagine?" Maximus jumped in front of me to ask.

"Rayden!" I muttered, my voice shaking.

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

Chapter 288-The Guys Vs Me

Chapter 288: 288-The Guys Vs Me

Helanie:

"He is at Benita's café right now," Maximus informed me as we rushed in his car to find him. The snake was headed towards Rayden, and if it bit him, Maximus would be in so much trouble for not being careful with his weapons.

I'm not gonna lie, I might even get expelled from the academy for using the weapon so recklessly.

"Hey, don't feel so bad. It will be fine. Just keep looking at the road. It might have even changed back to its dagger form," Maximus must've noticed how anxiously I had been rubbing my hands together. I was honestly terrified for both of us if the weapon was used recklessly.

"You said two minutes, two minutes are up. So maybe--" I gulped when I remembered how it sprinted towards its target.

"Yeah, that's what I'm saying. We're fine," he didn't sound too reassuring himself. I guess because we were in parts of the woods that were close to the café, and the snake was moving with magical speed.

"He will be fine. The only issue is that somebody might grab the dagger if they find it lying around like that," Maximus explained again.

That's why these kinds of weapons are supposed to be used with much care.

"I guess Emma was right. It's a job of responsibility," I sighed, shaking my head and feeling bad about getting Maximus in trouble.

"No! She wasn't right. Your real place is right beside me. Helanie, you need to learn all these things better than the others. Because after our marriage, you'll be helping me a lot with my business. I'll need you to take control," he said the words so casually that it took me a minute before I realized what he was saying.

But I was so anxious that I didn't want to argue or talk about anything else. I kept my eyes on the road, but I swear I could see a little tint of redness on my cheek through the mirror.

"There," Maximus yelled as he spotted something on the road.

"That is the dagger," I jumped up and sat up in excitement.

"It's probably twenty minutes away from the café." I got out, checking the time. Thankfully, it was a deserted road, so nobody saw the dagger and grabbed it. Maximus grabbed it and put it back in the box with a lock on it.

"Now! Feeling better?" Maximus asked me, smiling as he leaned back in his chair, his face turned towards me.

"Much better," I replied with a deep sigh.

"Now that we're already here, how about we grab something to eat as well?" he suggested, sounding very concerned. He had expressed his worry about me not eating well throughout the day. I didn't even know he had been paying such close attention to me.

"Yeah, sure," I said half absent-mindedly. I wasn't sure if I would be okay going to a café where Rayden would be. Did Maximus not remember he would be there? Why was he okay with being seen with me?

"Actually, Rayden--" I shut up when Maximus raised his finger, as he understood what I was about to say.

"Don't worry about that. You can tell them I have hired you," he quickly helped me with my concern. I gave him a nod, relying on him.

Once we reached the café and got out, we were greeted by a sight we didn't expect to encounter right away.

Outside the café stood Arlo and Rayden, hands on each other's collars and yelling at each other. They both had bloody noses and looked like a mess.

"Just stop it!" Jenny screamed, pacing back and forth anxiously. Rayden had already healed, but his behavior remained the same--always troublesome.

"Do you think I won't find out? You were scared I would take over your top senior badge since there are only a handful," Rayden was yelling, shaking Arlo's body.

"Fucking let him go," Riri yelled from the other side, making me roll my eyes at her being present at the scene. She seemed much weaker now. Probably from the stress of being expelled.

"No! Let me have a word with this bastard. There are only a handful of badges, and since Riri left, you could get hers. Why would I try to get you killed to secure my badge when my badge isn't even in danger?" Arlo punched Rayden in the face, and he tumbled down onto the road. But he was quick to get up again and throw a punch at Arlo, which made Arlo lose his balance and go down with a thud.

"Now that's messy," Maximus hissed, briskly walking towards them. He was so big and broad, and when he approached them, they seemed like ants before him.

He rushed between the two and extended his arms, placing his hands on each of their chests as he pushed them far apart.

"I will not let any of you ruin our academy's reputation!" Maximus yelled, glaring at Rayden for wearing the red jacket while causing chaos.

Benita was standing outside the café, looking worried too.

"Go inside and take care of your customers. I'll take care of these nuisances," Maximus yelled at Benita, who jumped to her feet and turned to leave. But not before she narrowed her eyes to acknowledge my presence.

Now that it was only us, Maximus grunted and slapped Rayden on his head, then hit Arlo.

"Start talking now," Maximus yelled.

In that moment, Jenny sneakily walked over to stand beside me. She gently pinched my sweater, but I shrugged her hand off and took a few steps away from her, maintaining my distance because I knew what was coming next.

"He planned the whole lycan kill-me thing. It was his idea," Rayden began, causing a gulp to run down my throat.

"What?" Maximus seemed shocked at the revelation.

"That's a lie. Why would I do that? I was part of that plan. It just doesn't make any sense," Arlo explained. He wasn't lying, though. I was the one who had made up that lie.

"Really? Then why did you make Helanie replace my water and also tell her that you wanted me dead?" Rayden pointed at me, heads turning to me one by one. Jenny's gasp was why I didn't want to stand close to her.

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

Chapter 289-Like An Innocent One

Chapter 289: 289-Like An Innocent One

Helanie:

"Oh, she did." It was the way Riri rolled her eyes and crossed her arms over her chest that made me realize she was already implying I was the cause of their fight.

"Helanie, is it true? Did Arlo tell you to sabotage Rayden's plan?" Maximus used a much softer and calmer tone when confronting me. Jenny's eyes were also fixed on me.

"She did. Tell him, Helanie, what you told me," Rayden insisted. Just then, another car stopped behind us, distracting us for a moment.

Norman stepped out of the car, looking intimidating as he approached us. He took off his glasses, and the first thing he did was cast a quick glance at me before heading over to Rayden and Arlo.

He must think I'm always caught up in some mess.

The next thing he did was grab both of them by their collars--one hand on each--and pull them closer. "Now fight. We'll watch you two fight to the death."

He shook their bodies and yelled this time, "Do it! You love fighting, don't you? Your alpha egos are so inflated, so let it out. Let's watch you fight and die."

His voice was so deep and heavy that goosebumps quickly spread over my skin. I was terrified he'd turn his attention to me in this state.

His cheeks were flushed red with anger. The veins on his neck were bulging too. I could tell someone had called him and informed him about his students causing trouble in the pack. That's why he was so furious. He hated anyone tarnishing the academy's reputation; he had always spoken against it.

"Sir, he attacked me while I was minding my own business," Arlo said, his usual loud and prideful attitude nowhere to be found as Norman gripped his collar.

Norman shoved him back, making him land on the road while Riri rushed to his aid. But now, Norman was giving Rayden his full attention.

"What's your problem, huh? Can't control your alpha ego?" Norman kept holding him with one hand, lifting Rayden off the ground so they were eye level.

"Sir, I--I was angry because of what he did to me in the woods," Rayden stuttered.

It was almost amusing how their alpha egos crumbled whenever someone stronger confronted them.

"Explain," Norman barked, pushing him back and standing in front of him with his arms crossed over his chest. His biceps were so big that it seemed hard for him to fold his arms completely.

"Helanie told me everything about that night," Rayden began again, mentioning my name, and once more, all eyes turned to me.

"Sir, Helanie told Rayden that it was Arlo who had blackmailed and threatened her to replace the water in Rayden's gun so he would get killed by the lycan." Of course, it was Riri stepping forward to explain what I did that was so terrible that the others were still dealing with the consequences.

Norman raised his head and glared at me. "Did you--" His voice was heavy and thick when he started speaking, but he suddenly stopped and cleared his throat. The next time he spoke, his tone was much softer. "Did you tell him that?"

The change in his tone was surprising. I froze at his behavior before shaking my head.

"No! I didn't. I told him exactly what I said in front of you," I reminded Norman about that day. He frowned, turning back to Rayden.

"Huh? No! She said Arlo was the one behind the attack," Rayden claimed loudly, pointing at me and then at Arlo.

"I never did," I said firmly, defending myself.

"Rayden! You know you're shamelessly lying in front of me, don't you?" Norman groaned, biting his tongue as if struggling to contain his anger.

"Sir, she came to the hospital afterward and told me it was Arlo--" Rayden stopped abruptly when Norman shot him a harsh glare.

"She came with me, and she didn't even say anything. I was the one who explained to you that her gun had been left broken in the woods and that it was the senior students' fault for mixing the water, silver, and wolfsbane ratios wrong. She never mentioned Arlo once. And as far as I know, she didn't leave to come to the hospital again either," Norman said, staring him down.

"Umm," Rayden gulped, rubbing his face with his hands, looking completely lost.

"Maybe I was--under the influence of medicine and imagined it?" Rayden tried to make sense of why he thought he had seen me visit him. To him, it might've been a hallucination, but it seemed like Norman and Maximus thought otherwise.

"Yeah, it was the medicine," Norman grunted. "Now go back inside, apologize, and clean up the mess you made. And you will do it alone," Norman barked at Rayden, whose face turned pale at the thought of cleaning.

I could tell it would feel like a punishment worse than death for him. But since Norman was already glaring at him, he hurried inside to complete his task.

Jenny lingered around but left after Riri and Arlo had gone, following Rayden shortly after.

"It seems like he's using the excuse of medicine to lie about Helanie," Maximus said to his brother, who nodded.

"I remember it vividly. He wasn't that intoxicated. He's obviously lying. He didn't think I would come here to expose his lies," Norman muttered.

I stood behind them like a fragile girl with no clue why this man was lying about me.

"He's being reckless, Helanie. You will report to us if he tries anything else against you," Norman added. They had already uncovered several instances where Rayden had tried to harm me or cause trouble, so now they were paying close attention to his behavior toward me.

"I'll tear apart every organ in his body if he says her name one more time. Enough is enough--he keeps lying about her," Maximus said without holding back his anger.

Norman tilted his head toward us, his expression unreadable. It seemed like he was trying to figure out what was going on between Maximus and me.

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

Chapter 290-I Take My Own Stand Now

Chapter 290: 290-I Take My Own Stand Now

Helanie:

"We were heading to the café to grab something to eat after work," Maximus explained to his brother, who was sitting in the passenger seat next to him. We were now on our way back home.

I wondered what Jenny was thinking. But knowing she was on a date with Rayden when her mate spotted Arlo and picked up a fight. After all the chaos, we sat silently in the car, and Norman told the driver to take us home. I sat in the backseat, doodling in my notebook to avoid showing any expressions.

Norman had adjusted the mirror in such a way that if I lifted my head, I swear our eyes would meet. I am sure he was examining my body language after Rayden accused me of telling him that it was Arlo, who wanted him dead. But thankfully, I seemed convincing enough to them.

Once we arrived at the mansion, I handed Maximus the notebook containing the notes from today's work and rushed inside to avoid running into anyone else. I knew Rayden would confront me when no one was around.

The minute I entered my room, I was shocked to see Charlotte sitting in the chair, reading a book that Emmet had given me when I first arrived at the mansion.

"What are you doing here?" I asked sharply, sounding instantly irritated. Somehow, it made her scoff and roll her eyes at me.

"This is my mansion; I can go wherever I want," she replied, pretending to be engrossed in the book. In reality, I knew she didn't like reading. I'd heard the maids and even her mother scold her for not studying or doing anything useful with her life.

"Well—," I marched up to her and snatched the book out of her hands, shocking her, obviously. She didn't know I could stand up for myself. Just because I usually let Maximus stand up for me, she probably thought I was an easy target. That's why she had come to my room to bully me in private.

"Helanie, you've been losing your mind lately. This kind of behavior isn't acceptable towards the owner of the house," she pointed to herself, her eyes already glistening with tears of anger.

Every time someone gave her a harsh response, she would tear up like she was being treated unfairly.

"Owner? Didn't Maximus tell you what you really are? Just a guest," I reminded her of the morning's incident, which made her clench her jaw even harder.

"He only said that because he was upset with me. We have our own arguments and personal issues," she managed to steady her voice and cleared her throat. Her fingers reached for a strand of her hair, which she began twisting nervously.

"Oh really? Funny how he's always arguing with you. Aren't you tired of trying too hard?" I said mockingly, folding my arms across my chest and tapping my foot on the floor.

She looked flustered at my statement or maybe realized I knew a little too much about her and Maximus.

"What do you mean?" she asked, swallowing hard, the motion of her throat clearly visible to me.

"You know what I mean. Now get out!" I pointed at the door, and as I stepped aside to have a clear view of it, I saw Norman standing there.

Charlotte noticed him too, so she immediately began her act of playing the victim, pretending I was mistreating her. I had expected this, so I turned to look directly at her face.

"I just wanted to spend some time with you. But I guess—you hate everyone who cares about you because you're such a big shot now, being part of the academy," she said, her voice shaky and tears spilling from her eyes. Her acting was so convincing that if I had heard her use those lines on someone else, I might have believed her too. I wouldn't be surprised if Norman fell for it.

"Charlotte!" he said her name firmly, and she yelped, pretending not to have noticed him earlier. She quickly stood up and lowered her head, sniffing to make it seem like she was trying to hide her tears.

"Didn't your mother teach you not to enter someone's room without their permission?" Coming from Norman, it sounded even more cutting. He had a strange way of delivering harsh words that felt like a slap to the face. Charlotte looked taken aback, possibly not expecting such a cold response, even with her impressive acting skills.

"But I'm her cousin—," she started, only for Norman to cut her off.

"Shush! Still—not allowed. Now leave. I need to speak with Helanie," he said sharply, a permanent frown on his face. He stepped aside to give her room to leave.

Charlotte didn't raise her head as she rushed out of the room, her eyes brimming with fresh tears.

This time, they were real.

Once she was gone, I shifted my focus to Norman. I had a feeling he had something important to say.

"Try to stay away from Rayden. If things aren't improving, you should avoid him at all costs," he advised, his hands in his pockets.

I nodded and then asked, "There's a meetup at the academy. What's it about?"

Norman shrugged, which only confused me more.

So even he didn't know the reason for the meeting?

"Emmet called for it. He says he has a good reason, so I'm trusting him. Don't worry about it; he'll handle everything," Norman explained, sounding tired. I couldn't help but wonder if he was getting enough sleep.

He always looked alert and healthy, thanks to his constant workouts, but there were times when his exhaustion was impossible to ignore.

"Okay, thank you!" I replied, breaking the silence.

Norman glanced around my room without moving from his spot. There was something unsettling about his quietness, like a storm brewing beneath his calm exterior.

"Anyway, make sure you attend lunch. Dad has an announcement to make," he added before turning and leaving the room like a bullet fired from a gun.

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

Chapter 291-That Is A Disaster

Chapter 291: 291-That Is A Disaster

Helanie:

My mom seemed to be in a very good mood. She sat with her hand extended on the table, and Lord McQuoid was holding it. Charlotte looked partially gloomy, but her eyes were glued to me. As for Emma, she had a huge, fake smile plastered on her confused face, making me wonder if she even knew what was going on.

The brothers, as usual, didn't show much enthusiasm. I had a feeling this had something to do with the business deal Lord McQuoid had been trying to make with the packs.

"Now that everyone is here, I would like to make an announcement," Lord McQuoid cleared his throat, adjusting himself in his chair, but not once did he let go of my mother's hand.

Maximus held a spoon and fork in his hands, his plate piled with food. His hands trembled as if he couldn't wait to start eating, clearly uninterested in whatever his father had to say.

Kaye looked upset, his head bowed but his eyes raised, fixed on his father. Emmet seemed physically present but mentally far away. Then there was Norman, his lips slightly pursed as he tapped his fingers against the glass of expensive wine meant for the occasion.

"It has been a long time since I introduced you all to my new mate. She is my charm, the light of my life. Without her, I can't imagine living another day. Truly. She has such an impact on my life that I feel obligated to love her endlessly. Whenever I'm down, and there's no one to hear the cries of my heart, she comes like a warm ray of sunlight and lifts my spirits," Lord McQuoid said, his words full of emotion.

They were powerful words, especially about a woman who was the complete opposite of how she was as a mother.

She might not have been a good mother, but as a mate, she seemed to be a perfect choice, judging by the way Lord McQuoid praised her.

"So, it's time I hold this hand and slip a beautiful ring onto her finger," he announced.

The moment he said it, I watched the brothers snap their gazes toward him. Maximus dropped his fork and spoon onto his plate, glancing at his brothers to confirm that they were just as shocked and upset as he was. They were. None of them looked happy.

Charlotte met my gaze, a smirk spreading across her face. She knew about my strained relationship with my mother, so it must have been amusing for her to see me ignored by her now that she was officially becoming the rogue king's wife and mate.

As for Emma, she opened her mouth in shock, covering it with her hand before clapping enthusiastically. It felt fake to me. But that's exactly who she and her mother were—always fake and phony.

I didn't show much reaction but lowered my head. I wasn't too happy either. Somehow, this news felt devastating to me.

I was mates with two of these brothers and attracted to the third, who was slowly proving that I could be loved and cherished too. But now, seeing them as my stepbrothers would make things incredibly hard—and a taboo for most.

"I am announcing a grand engagement ceremony, just as she deserves, for next week. I hope you all will be as happy for me as I've been for your successes," Lord McQuoid's voice wavered slightly as he glanced at his sons, wanting them to share in his joy.

Of course, they weren't happy. But as Lord McQuoid raised his glass to toast, Maximus abruptly got up to leave.

However, Norman grabbed his arm and gestured for him to sit back down. The smile on my mother's face had disappeared.

Lord McQuoid's eyes glistened with unshed tears. When Maximus reluctantly sat down, Emmet raised his glass steadily. Next was Norman, who followed suit. Then came Kaye and Maximus, but instead of toasting, Maximus started downing his wine like there was no tomorrow.

Their father watched them with visible disappointment but quickly pretended it wasn't a big deal.

"Cheers to the couple!" Charlotte shouted, raising her glass with exaggerated enthusiasm, making my mother and Lord McQuoid smile at her.

"Now, shall we start dinner?" Emma giggled excessively, but there was something unsettling in her laughter. She was showing her lower teeth too much, and I couldn't help but wonder what it meant.

Once dinner ended, I went straight to my room. I wasn't feeling well either.

I sat on my bed, fingers grazing my pendant as I stared out the window. My revenge against Ryadan was progressing. So far, I had managed to weaken him. But I needed one decisive blow before facing him in battle.

"I need to learn to fight," I said aloud, jumping up with renewed determination and planting my feet on the floor, fists clenched.

"Okay, show me what I need to do," I muttered, setting up a video tutorial to teach me some moves. This wasn't the first time I was doing this.

I had been learning from videos and practicing in my room, but I couldn't shake the feeling that I lacked discipline.

"Haiyyaa!" I yelled, aiming a kick at the pillow, which went flying across the room and knocked over the lamp.

"Oops!" I yelled, and as I hurried to fix the lamp, I heard a knock on the door.

"Wait a minute," I called out, quickly setting the lamp upright again before going to answer the door.

Standing there was Maximus, and he looked like a mess.

"Maximus, what happened to you?" I asked, glancing around to ensure nobody was watching us interact.

"Helanie, I don't want to become your stepbrother," he said, his voice filled with urgency, his eyes looking at me with so much affection it made my heart skip a beat.

"I know," I replied, feeling exhausted and helpless, unsure what could even be done at this point.

"Tell me if you're ready to hold my hand. I'll crash this engagement ceremony," he said, his words catching me off guard.

My jaw dropped at his bold demand.

I swallowed hard, taking a step back from him as the weight of his words settled over me.

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

Chapter 292-Giving My Stepbrother A Chance

Chapter 292: 292-Giving My Stepbrother A Chance

Helanie:

"Maximus, what are you saying?" I wasn't sure if he was even in his right mind. He seemed drunk and probably didn't even know what he was talking about.

"Tell me, Helanie. Can you give me a chance in your life? I'm not asking you to accept me right away, but at least let me stop this engagement so we can figure out our own... relationship," he pleaded, his eyes looking like they were about to overflow with tears.

I was worried about him. Seeing him so upset wasn't something I was prepared for. And it confused me how deeply concerned I felt seeing him like this.

"Tell me, what do you feel about me?" he insisted, stepping inside so he could enter my room. I had to step back to maintain some distance.

"There's so much you don't even know about me—," I started rambling, but he quickly hushed me.

"First, tell me. Do you even feel anything for me?" he asked, bending down and resting his hands on his knees. "I want to date you. Let's see if you can fall for me. Tell me if you even like me, even a little," he demanded, his eyes shimmering with tears.

I had never known he could be so broken because of me.

"Tell me," he pressed again, his voice louder now. The reflexive answer slipped out of me instantly.

"Yes!"

That was all I said before his face lit up. He cupped my cheeks in his hands and pulled me closer. The moment his lips touched mine, the unease in my body started to fade.

It felt strange. I thought I hated being touched by anyone now. Was my body healing? First Kaye, and now Maximus.

But then, I remembered Lord McQuoid's announcement, and I gently pulled away from the kiss. I hadn't even had the chance to savor it properly before the thought hit me hard.

"Helanie, just let me take care of everything," he said, suddenly sounding so reassured.

"Maximus, I do have feelings for you, but that doesn't mean—," I tried explaining, but he seemed to already know where I was going with it.

"I just want to date you first. I know where I stand, but it'll help you figure out where you stand and if you want to accept me as your mate and husband," he said with understanding in his voice.

I knew I had answered his question and given him hope, but there was a part of me that couldn't stop worrying about so many things.

About his brothers being my mates, about my mother being his stepsister, about my revenge, and even about my own mental health.

"It's okay. Whatever it is that you think I don't know, you can share it with me. I won't judge. I'm just so happy—," he said, excitedly jumping up and down before forcing himself to act more composed. "Hey, don't be too worried. I'll make sure to stop this engagement."

But this was the moment I had to stop him. "You have to wait first. Don't do anything until I say so. Because, Maximus, I'm not sure if I'm ready to date you yet. Let the engagement pass—it's not like it's their mating ceremony."

I didn't know why I felt so uneasy. I knew he wasn't my fated mate, so I didn't have to worry about the promise I made to the Moon Goddess about not accepting anyone she chose for me. But still, there was something Kaye needed to do before I could move forward and date Maximus.

Yes, I was enjoying Maximus' company. And it felt like it was about time I let someone into my life—not to mark me or fully accept me, but at least to show me that I could have a happy life, too. And Maximus was someone who had recently touched my heart.

"But Helanie, that would be too late. This engagement will announce their relationship to the world," he said, shaking his head in disapproval.

"The world already knows, Maximus," I replied, and he let out a sigh.

"I just need to do something, and then—" I paused, but he smiled even brighter.

"And then you'll date me, right? Damn it! I can't believe you'll actually be mine," he said with a happy sigh, placing his hands on his waist.

Was it really such a big deal for him to date me?

He seemed so happy about it. I knew I'd face harsh criticism from the academy students, from his brothers, and even from my mother, who might come for my throat. But I would be happy.

If I could fight for myself, I could fight for my love, too.

"Maximus, just don't celebrate too soon. Once I've taken care of this one thing, I'll need you to sit down and listen to me. There's a lot, like I said, that you need to know about me. And I'm not sure if that will change how you see me. That's why I want you to make your decision after you've heard everything," I said nervously, pacing back and forth, likely confusing him even more.

"You don't even know anything about me yet. Not even that I couldn't get to celebrate my eighteenth birthday. There is so much," I suddenly stopped talking. That eighteenth birthday that I wanted to celebrate so bad got me in trouble.

"There's nothing you could say that would make me love you any less. I'll be waiting," he said lovingly, his tone always so soft when he spoke to me.

"But tell me, what were you doing before I got here?" he asked, raising a brow as his gaze fell on the pillow on the floor.

Then his eyes moved to my phone, where a video was still playing. He tilted his head slightly, then nodded as if piecing together what I had been up to.

"You want to learn to fight? Is it for Norman's classes?" he asked. Of course, he had no idea it was for something else entirely. But sure, it would help me with the combat class as well.

"How about this—I'll ask Norman to give you lessons. I could teach you myself, but I'm not a great teacher, just a good fighter. Norman, on the other hand, has proper lessons planned out. If he could tutor you before his classes officially start, you'd be ready for them. What do you think?"

His suggestion would have been perfect—if only it had been about anyone other than Norman.

But one has to bow before the buffoon in times of need.

So, with a gentle nod of my head, I accepted his offer. "That would be so helpful," I replied.

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

Chapter 293-The Pregnancy Test

Chapter 293: 293-The Pregnancy Test

Emmet:

I returned to my room with so many theories running through my head. I noticed that Helanie didn't look happy about her mother marrying our father. That was probably because her mother didn't want her around either, so celebrating her good news wasn't likely on her list.

I didn't care about her mother. She could marry or not marry my father—it didn't matter to me.

But my brothers were upset; that much was obvious. Kaye and Maximus missed their childhood, hence there was something missing in their maturity. They blamed Ursula too hard for ruining my parent's relationship, but my parents weren't innocent either.

"Emmet!" A knock on the door—two quick taps followed by two louder ones—already told me who it was.

"Come in, Norman," I called, glancing at the clock. He walked in but suddenly froze when he noticed what I was doing.

"It'll be midnight soon. Are you okay?" Norman stood beside me, his eyes also fixed on the clock.

"Yeah, I'm always ready," I replied, my tone cold.

"Emmet, don't you ever feel tired?" he asked, though he already knew my answer. He'd asked me this many times before.

"I don't. It is what it is," I said, turning to him and giving him a small smile. I didn't like seeing him worried about me.

"I'll be fine. I always come back alive, don't I? You don't need to worry about me. I think you should be careful yourself. You're in a much tougher position than I am," I said, urging him to focus on himself.

If he got caught at midnight, he'd face a serious backlash. He'd worked incredibly hard to get where he was today, and it wouldn't be fair if he got into trouble just because of those two hours.

"Anyway, I've eaten plenty, so I'll be fine," I reassured him, walking away to grab the file I needed to work on.

That's when I noticed the colorful, poppit notebook in his hands.

"What's that you've got there? Don't tell me you brought this as a gift for me," I joked, making him roll his eyes.

"If this is your kind of thing, I'll get you one too," he shot back, joining in on the joke before walking to the table and setting the notebook down. "Maximus asked me to give this to you. Helanie wrote down the details of the weapons he tried today. He said you wanted the info for your book," Norman explained, leaning against the wall and sliding one hand into his pocket.

"Hmm, Maximus couldn't come himself?" I tried not to sound like a child craving his brother's attention. We were too old for that. But that didn't mean it didn't bother me.

Maximus and Kaye were my younger brothers, and they meant the world to me. Sadly, I couldn't tell them how much I cared for them because that would mean we'd have to start talking and being close again. And that would lead to them digging into my life. I couldn't let that happen.

It was for their own good.

"He was tired." I knew when Norman was lying. He would avoid eye contact whenever he was hiding the truth or feeling uncomfortable.

"Got it, I understand," I nodded, grabbing the diary. "Thank you, though. I needed the details on his recent weapons. They're pretty deadly," I commented, trying to steer the conversation away from the awkward topic of my little brothers hating my guts.

"All right then, make sure you've rested a little before midnight," Norman said, patting my back and ruffling my hair, which made me laugh. Even though I wanted to be seen as an adult, I was still his little brother in his eyes.

Watching him carry so much pressure on his shoulders was always hard for me to accept. Everything he had been through, the pain he had endured—it made me wonder how he managed to keep his anger for the world bottled up. And how he still found the strength to love and care for others. Not just anyone, though. He cared deeply for his brothers.

"You too," I said softly as he waved his hand and walked out of the room.

"Ah! Let's see these weapons," I sighed, leaning back in my chair and putting my legs up on the table. As I opened the notebook, a smile spread across my face.

Helanie had such beautiful handwriting. She wrote in cursive, and she never missed a stroke. It was strange how everything about her seemed so perfect.

Wherever she went, people noticed her. Even in every test, even as a wolfless girl, she managed to outshine others.

It made me wonder what her wolf would be like when she finally awakened. Definitely not an omega. But could a powerful wolf really come from two omegas?

I continued reading the first page, then moved to the next. That's when I noticed her handwriting began to shake a little—it seemed like she'd been scared of the venom's effects.

"She's so obvious," I mumbled, rolling my eyes at her fear. She must have looked so cute.

But then something else caught my attention. It made me sit up straight in the chair, lower my legs from the table, and grip the notebook tightly.

"The doodles," I whispered, standing up to grab something I had saved a few months ago.

Holding that item, I compared the doodles to the ones in the notebook. My heart started pounding in my chest as I realized they were exactly the same. Not a single difference.

"This is Helanie's pregnancy test?" I muttered in shock, unable to believe what I was seeing.

"How could it be? Was she really pregnant? Is that why she looked so worried when Sydney and the others found this test? But what about the baby?"

Questions swirled in my mind. I remembered her looking pale and sick, and how she had stormed out of my class like a whirlwind.

Of course, she never showed any signs of pregnancy. So... did she—did she abort the baby?

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

Chapter 294-Let's Have A Fight Stepbro

Chapter 294: 294-Let's Have A Fight Stepbro

Helanie:

"Are you going to skip the combat training just like you skipped the therapy sessions?" Norman commented with a scoff, briskly walking ahead of me and towards the deep woods.

I knew what he was trying to imply. Ever since his brother told me last night that he would ask Norman to give me extra classes before the combat started, Norman had been giving me this look. And now that we were finally alone and headed to the woods for our first class, he was sharing his thoughts with me.

"I didn't think the therapy was working," I muttered under my breath, being unreasonable since I hadn't even given the therapy a fair chance.

He suddenly stopped, and I bumped into his broad back. I stepped back and rubbed my nose, complaining about it.

"We're here," he muttered, of course, pretending his sudden stop was not because of my words.

I looked around and then at him. He wore a white shirt with gray shorts and gray sneakers. His hair was fluffy but shiny, as if he had used gel. Yet, the strands were sticking out, with sharp pieces loose on his forehead.

I wore my tracksuit, but with my purple sweater since it was so cold out here.

"Now what?" I asked impatiently, my hands on my waist. Maybe because of our past history, I didn't expect much from Norman. When it comes to helping me, he does it his own way, a messy way.

"Now you shut up!" he snapped, pointing at me, and then added, "We'll focus on flexibility first."

As soon as I heard that, I felt like he was just trying to waste my time. So, I shook my head and muttered, "I do it every day. I'm flexible enough."

I noticed his expression hardening, a sign that I needed to shut up and do as he said. So, I positioned myself in a way that didn't require words, but he knew I was ready.

"Do jumping jacks," he said, and started doing them himself. He was so big and heavy that whenever he landed on the ground, I swear I heard the ground beneath me shaking.

I followed him and started doing what he was doing. In the next hour, we had done several exercises that already had me worn out.

"You need to work on your stamina," he advised, watching me stop and kneel down.

"Why—what—happened—to my stamina? You only—want—to criticize—me," I barely managed to say. That made him raise his brow and purse his lips.

"Now! You need to understand the value of balance in combat. Step with your leading foot first, followed by the rear foot, make sure the distance between your feet stays the same," he instructed, watching me try to balance my weight.

When he was describing it, I thought he was just making things up. But the minute I started following his instructions, I realized it wasn't just that. It was way harder than it seemed.

We practiced backward and sideways balance movements. However, every time I lost my balance, Norman gave me a harsh look.

"Ouch!" I almost tripped, which made me giggle. But I didn't know it also upset the big monster in front of me. When he walked so close to me, I had no clue. I felt something hit my head and grimaced, looking at him.

He had rolled a file in his hands and hit me on the head with it.

"This is not a joke. Take it seriously," he said. He wasn't wrong, but I just hated him, so I pouted and continued to practice.

As the darkness started to take over, I realized the whole day had passed. I was tired and exhausted but still ready to take another step forward in the combat lessons.

"That will be it for today," Norman announced, barely looking tired. In fact, it seemed like the fact that he hadn't worked out crazily made him annoyed. He had to match my pace. It wasn't just me doing these lessons; he was following through as well.

"And tomorrow we will start learning the big moves, right?" I asked excitedly, but he wrinkled his nose and looked bothered.

"We'll continue these for at least two more days," he said, and I straightened up to face him.

"You're wasting my time. I already did these. And when I do these with the other students during the classes, I'll get even better at them," I insisted, wanting to start learning the main combat lessons already. The reason was that I couldn't be certain when Rayden would strike me.

To Norman, I might have sounded like a spoiled brat, but deep down, I was scared of Rayden and him repeating the events of that night. Not only that, I wanted to punish him so badly.

"Helanie! You speak to me this way again, and I will leave you tied to a tree for the lycan to come and eat you alive," that was the first time he had spoken about the lycan like that. It was as if the lycan would listen to him.

"How mean—" I hissed, "and you can't tie me to the tree." I muttered.

"Sure!" he said, with the most judgmental look, which irritated me.

"I'm serious. You can't tie me to the tree," I muttered. I had seen some videos on the internet about how to react when someone attacks you. And I was sure I could tackle someone down, if not that, at least save myself.

"Okay!" he added in the same cold tone, which annoyed me even more.

"Come on, try it," I nudged him as he walked past me. He raised an eyebrow, then grimaced, waving his hand to dismiss me.

"What? Are you scared? Don't you want to prove to your student that you can tie her to a tree like you claimed?" I was suddenly so angry at his comment that I wanted him to try. I knew I could pull off some moves and get away from the tree.

"Come on," I pressed him further, watching as he tilted his head and looked at me tiredly.

"You really want this?" he asked in a low, deep voice.

"Yeah!" I hissed confidently.

He nodded and began walking in slow circles, smirking slightly.

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

Chapter 295-Hugging Norman

Chapter 295: 295-Hugging Norman

Helanie:

"Don't cry if you get hurt in the process," he said, looking so happy, as if he already knew he would win.

"I wo—" I was about to confirm I wouldn't when he lunged at me. As soon as he grabbed my arm, I started scratching him.

I know that wasn't part of the match, but I had learned to defend myself with whatever I could.

"If that's how you want to play," he grunted, grabbing my wrists to stop me and shoving me against the tree.

I didn't realize it would be so easy for him to overpower me.

"Since we don't have anything to restrain you with, keeping you still for a minute should work just the same," he whispered in my face, leaning over me as he pinned me to the tree.

Our eyes met for a brief moment, and I came up with my next plan. I turned my face to the side and bit his left arm so hard that I swear I could taste his blood.

"Let go!" I screamed, only to try biting him on the neck when he freed his hand. That's when he had to back away to avoid it, and I managed to free myself.

I tried to run, but he reached out again. This time, he accidentally grabbed my sweater, and the next thing I knew, I heard a loud ripping sound.

My body went numb. All thoughts of the fight left my mind as I stopped and stared at my sweater.

"My sweater!" I uttered helplessly. He froze completely and stepped back, raising his hands to show he was surrendering.

"Why would you do that?!" I screamed at the top of my lungs. Even though I had a shirt on underneath, I felt so exposed.

The ripping sound triggered something deep within me. I tried so hard to control my emotions and not let my trauma show, but I couldn't help it.

"You said you wanted to fight—" he said, sounding exhausted, using a tone that made it seem like I was overreacting.

"You idiot—" I shouted, slapping his chest and then lunging at him in a full-blown catfight, flailing my arms wildly to hit him wherever I could.

"Okay, enough!" he said, putting his hand on my forehead and pushing me away. I kept swinging my arms, but his extended arm and firm hand on my forehead prevented me from reaching him.

He stood effortlessly in his spot, watching me with a mix of exhaustion and disbelief.

"You're so mean—why would you do that? Don't you know it hurts? It's my freaking birthday, and you ruined it! You had no right to do that! When I say don't—it means don't!" I yelled, my voice muffled against his palm as I kept flailing my arms recklessly.

Then, suddenly, he moved his hand, and the momentum I'd been using to reach him made me stumble forward uncontrollably.

I landed straight against his chest with a thud, my fists softly pounding on him. I kept sobbing and screaming into his chest, my eyes tightly shut because I didn't want to face reality.

The reality of what my life had turned into.

"I'm sorry."

His sudden apology stopped me in my tracks. I sniffled, slowly becoming aware of my outburst. How I reacted was so wrong. He hadn't done anything malicious—I was just overwhelmed by my own trauma.

That sweater... it had been with me through everything. It was more than clothing—it was like a hug, wrapping me in safety.

I slowly lifted my head, noticing how he stood there with his hands raised in the air, careful not to touch me since I had been yelling at him for doing just that.

"I'm sorry," he said again.

"Uh..." I cleared my throat, feeling utterly embarrassed. "It's okay. It's just... I really loved that sweater."

The awkward silence between us felt unbearable, but thankfully, he broke it.

"I can get it stitched for you," he offered, extending his hand toward the torn sweater.

"No need. It was crocheted by my mother when she was young. She gave it to me when I was little, saying that one day, when I grew up, I could wear it. But... she's not my mother anymore. So there's no reason for me to keep it either," I said, each word trembling with emotion.

"About your birthday—," he mumbled.

"I was wrong about that, got confused," I lied quickly.

I turned my body slightly away from him, unable to look Norman in the eye. Slowly, I took off the sweater and threw it on the ground.

"I'm sorry for the bite and the scratches," I said, covering my face with my hands, feeling so stupid.

"It's okay. You were pretty good," he replied.

I'd never heard Norman try to comfort someone, and it only made me feel even more embarrassed about myself. I didn't want anyone's pity.

"Don't lie. The only regret I have is that I couldn't kick you in the balls," I muttered, feeling bad for not using that move.

"Huh? You were going to kick me where? Helanie! The fight was just about me tying you to a tree while you defended yourself—not 'let's kill Norman in the worst way possible,'" he said, his annoyed tone back. Somehow, it helped me relax.

"Let me drop you home now. I have to be somewhere soon," Norman said, checking the time on his phone.

We walked back to the car, and a few minutes later, we were already at home.

After stepping out of the car and watching Norman drive off for his important meeting, I noticed Maximus coming out of the mansion.

"Oh, he left. Did you want to speak with him?" I asked Maximus, looking like he'd been in a hurry to catch his brother.

"Nah, I know he has an important client coming over for dinner. Actually, I came out for you," Maximus said with a smile. That's when I noticed how freshly dressed he was.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I need to take you somewhere," he said so casually that I forgot to respond properly for a moment.

Then, as I processed what he'd said, I felt compelled to answer in a way that might've hurt his feelings. "I don't want anyone questioning us, Maximus. I'll just go back inside and freshen up for the night."

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

Chapter 296-Is It A Date?

Chapter 296: 296-Is It A Date?

Helanie:

I stormed into the mansion and straight to my room, avoiding Maximus's face. I knew I'd ruined his mood—I could tell.

But I didn't know where he wanted me to go, and if anyone found out about it, they'd start spreading rumors. My mother would lose it and probably kick me out of here.

I needed this place to stay. And after how I acted with Norman, I was sure he'd want the crazy girl gone too.

Staring at my reflection in the bathroom mirror after a shower, I couldn't stop the tears from welling up. There were moments when I'd talk to myself about that night.

So many scenarios played in my head. In one, I never went out to celebrate my birthday with Altan. In another, I didn't befriend Altan or accept his proposal. And there was the one where my father arrived in time to fight off the bad alphas.

So many possibilities—but none of them were real. The harsh truth was what I had to live with.

After drying my hair and putting on a blue dress, I stepped out of the bathroom. The practice today had left me drained, and all I wanted was to eat a good meal and rest.

I couldn't tell if Norman would be ready to train me tomorrow. I might've pissed him off, or maybe he thought I was too much trouble.

I sighed, flopping onto my bed and glancing at my phone. Just as I was about to text Lamar to remind him about the academy meeting tomorrow, Maximus's call lit up my screen.

I answered, thinking I needed to explain more clearly why I couldn't go out with him earlier.

"Hello—" My words were cut short when I heard him breathing heavily on the other end.

"Maximus, are you okay?" I asked, sitting up, my pulse quickening.

"I got—I got in trouble. Shit! I need you—to come outside, to the road at the first curve. Helanie, I—" he stuttered, his words shaky and scattered.

"Maximus, should I call Norman or Emmet—" I started, but he cut me off with a groan of pain.

"No! I don't want to be judged. It's okay if you can't come. I'll manage something," he said, his voice trembling.

Before I could respond, the call ended.

He didn't want Norman to know, likely because his brother was at an important meeting. He didn't want the others to know either. That meant he was in a really bad situation.

I couldn't sit here and let him handle it alone. He'd done so much for me. Anytime I needed help, he was there. And even if he hadn't been, I couldn't stand the thought of him being in pain.

I slipped on my shoes and sprinted out of the mansion.

It was 6 p.m., and the darkness was setting in quickly, but I didn't care. The cold air bit at me, and I wasn't even wearing a sweater—just the knee-length dress from earlier. I walked briskly, holding my phone with the flashlight on as the storm began to roll in.

When I reached the curve he'd mentioned, I saw something red on the road—but no sign of Maximus.

Panic took over as my mind raced. I started dialing his number while following the red trail that led into the woods.

Red handprints smeared on trees and branches guided me deeper into the forest. He must've been hurt. But why hadn't he come to the mansion? Why had he gone into the woods?

I didn't even notice when tears started spilling down my face. I sniffled, wiping them away with the back of my hand as I kept going, my heart pounding with worry.

The rogue community is terrifying when the sun goes down, but I fearlessly kept searching for Maximus.

After some time, I reached a place that made me frown. Fairy lights were strung across the trees, illuminating a table and two chairs in the middle. Lanterns and decorations added an enchanting charm to the scene. My brain warned me not to panic—it was trying to tell me Maximus was fine, considering what I was seeing. But I still couldn't believe it until I saw him.

And then I did.

He stepped out from behind a tree with a cake in his hands, the candles on top flickering gently.

"Happy birthday to you!" he sang, making me stop in my tracks, staring at him in disbelief.

"Happy birthday to you," he continued in his beautiful voice.

"Happy birthday, my Helanie! Happy birthday to you!"

He finished the song with a smile, placing the cake on the table before walking toward me.

I was frozen, unable to move a single muscle. He came closer, leaning in near my face.

"Happiest birthday to you, Helanie," he whispered softly before kissing me lovingly on the cheek.

"You freaking scared me!" I pushed him back but then moved closer to slap his chest.

He chuckled in response, his laughter making me pout even harder.

"At least I found out you're ride-or-die. You silly thing, you came here following the red marks thinking they were my blood. Did it not cross your mind that some monster might've attacked me and dragged me into the woods? You just recklessly followed?" He looked shocked as he explained what he thought of my actions.

"You were in trouble—I couldn't think of anything else," I replied, still teary-eyed. The thought of him being hurt had genuinely shaken me.

"And you are so adorable," he said, pinching my cheeks.

My attention shifted back to the table and the breathtaking setting. It looked like something out of a fairytale. The ambiance was magical, with a small fire burning nearby, casting a warm glow.

"But it's not my birthday," I said, hating to break it to him that he had the date wrong.

"I know, but you didn't get to celebrate your eighteenth birthday recently," he said softly.

It was a sweet gesture, and I appreciated it deeply. But I couldn't help asking myself:

Do I ever want to celebrate my birthday again?

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

Chapter 297-A FuckBoy

Chapter 297: 297-A FuckBoy

Helanie:

"What? You don't like it? I did it all by myself. No help from the warriors or any decorators," he said proudly, making me pout and then nod my head.

Yes! I wanted to celebrate my birthday again. I would not let those alphas decide anything for me.

"I love this," I said, and it brought a huge smile of comfort to his face.

"So, shall we go eat your cake?" he winked, and I rolled my eyes at how he always made everything sound so dirty. We walked over to the table, and he pulled my chair for me like a gentleman.

But I kept looking around in worry. We were in an open space, deep in the dangerous woods, with the night upon us. I was beyond terrified in my heart until I felt him reaching out for my hand and holding it across the table.

"Hey, don't worry. When you're with me, no monster can come near you," he said, not realizing how much it meant to me.

"What if it did?" I asked, and he, who was busy grabbing the knife, raised his head in confusion. "What if a monster did come here to attack me? What would you do? Let's say he is someone you cannot fight. He's more dangerous and powerful than you. Now it's up to you to either save yourself or stay and probably die?" That question popped into my head, and I asked it thoughtlessly.

But his response was quick. "Then I'm making sure you run away while I fight till my last breath."

He looked sternly at me before adding, "This should not even be a question in your mind, Helanie. I am not afraid of losing my life for you. I know you might think it's too soon for me to be making such big claims, but I mean every word of it. Even if you don't accept me, even if you never want to be with me—you will always be my priority." His words and the intense look in his eyes warmed up my body.

"Now, let's cut the cake because we have a whole night to enjoy ourselves," he rubbed his palms excitedly, coming out of his chair and standing behind me to hold the knife with me.

I cut the cake, but there were tears still trying to force their way into my eyes. I had tried so hard to become an alpha's priority in the past—to the point that I ignored all the red flags he waved in my face.

And I saw how it ended. You can't force someone to love you.

"Umm, I love a good cheesecake," I closed my eyes to enjoy the taste of it. I used to bake cakes myself to sell them back when my stepmother made me work. But it's a different kind of satisfaction when you don't put in any work and simply enjoy a treat.

"True, I enjoy a good cheesecake too," he whispered from behind me, turning my face to the side with his hand and rubbing his lips over mine to taste the cream left on my lips.

It filled my heart with butterflies and sparkles. I quickly looked ahead and shyly glanced down.

"I want to be with you so badly, you have no idea," Maximus expressed his feelings again.

"I love you, Helanie!" His confession always sent goosebumps across my skin. The best part was that he didn't pressure me to respond or accept his love right away.

He just wanted us to date without any taboo title, and I admired his efforts. While I was busy thinking about revenge, there was someone who was bringing happiness into my life, and I guess I could allow myself to enjoy it. I deserved it.

"Now, how about we dance?" he asked, playing some music on his phone and holding his hand out to me. Smiling, I placed my hand in his. Soon, he pulled me close to his chest, making me giggle softly.

I rested my hand on his chest, and we began to sway slowly.

He taught me how to dance just by leading me to follow his steps. His eyes never left my face. There was so much emotion in them as he watched me.

"You know, when we finally get married and commit to each other, I'll build a house for us near my garage," he said softly, his fingers gently brushing my cheek. Our bodies were still moving in rhythm.

"Why near your garage?" I asked, confused.

"That land used to be an abandoned pack. I want to build our own community there. Somewhere away from everyone. I've noticed you don't really like crowds—kind of an introvert, it seems. That'll be a good place for you to have your own space and be the queen of your own land," he said while we danced. I didn't stop him because I loved hearing him talk.

It was bittersweet, though, because this reminded me of how things used to be with Altan.

"Have you ever been in love before, Helanie?" he asked out of the blue, and my heart skipped a beat. I had a bad feeling he noticed it since his hand was resting on my back, feeling my heartbeat.

"It's not a crime to love someone before, Helanie. You don't need to be so guarded about your past with me," he said, sounding a little hurt by my reaction.

"It's not that. It's just that it didn't really end well," I admitted, looking down and then gazing past him at the distance.

"I just want to know about you. But if you're not ready to share, that's okay. I'll tell you about my life instead," he offered, continuing, "I was a player—a 'fuck boy,' or whatever you want to call it. I had a different girl in my bed every night. My nights didn't feel complete unless I had someone with me."

I didn't know why he said that, but it changed my mood completely.

"In fact, I have a confession to make. Back when I was first expressing my feelings for you, I picked someone up from the club and had a little... intimate encounter with her," he finished.

I quietly ended the dance with him.

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

Chapter 298-I Was So Naive Back Then

Chapter 298: 298-I Was So Naive Back Then

Helanie:

Flashback:

"You know, after our marriage, we will have three kids," I said excitedly, my arms folded over his knees as he sat and smoked his cigarette. We had ventured out into the woods to enjoy the weather and also spend some time together.

I wanted to go out for a dinner date with him, but he said the pack members would see us together and his parents wouldn't like it.

"Hmm, three will be too much," he replied very coldly.

"Altan, I came here to spend time with you, and you're just focusing on that cigarette," I scoffed, pulling away from him.

"Helanie, this is how I enjoy myself. By the way, what's in that basket?" he asked, pointing his cigarette at my basket.

"Oh! Since we were going out on a picnic, I brought us some home-cooked meals. It was so hard for me to save this stuff from my stepmother because--" I noticed the bored look on his face that he gives every time I talk about my personal life issues, and it was

a cue that I needed to stop. "Anyway, I brought muffins, chicken bread, quesadillas," I stopped talking when I noticed he had stopped listening to me.

"Who are you texting?" The minute I felt like something was wrong, I grabbed his phone from his hands and quickly took a look.

He was texting some girl, saying very sexual things. In fact, he was talking about meeting up with her because I had bored him.

His exact texts were very demeaning.

'I want you to suck my dick after I am done with this boring picnic.'

'Send me a video of you pulling your panties down.'

"What the hell, Helanie!" he snatched the phone back from me and pushed me hard just to get away from me.

"Why would you touch my phone??" he yelled, making me forget to stand up. And when I did, I started tearing up.

"You're cheating on me?" I gasped.

He looked so angry until he heard me complain about catching him.

"It--it's nothing serious, Helanie. It's something every alpha does, trust me. It's not like I would go and actually sleep with this girl. It's just how we talk--I was just flirting," he rolled his eyes and used a very harsh tone even when he was caught sending vulgar texts.

"You think my picnic is boring?" I sniffled, watching as he narrowed his eyes at me.

"Because of this--yeah! I am a young man, and I need more than just some empty talk, Helanie. Anyway, you've already spoiled my mood. If you can't trust me, then I'm sorry, we have no future together," he pulled out the regular dismissal card. He would always do this to me, and somehow, I would always go back to him, begging him to forgive me.

I knew deep down his excuses were nonsense. That was still cheating, but I convinced myself that he would change once we got married.

End Of Flashback:

"Hey! But after that night, I swear I haven't even thought about anyone else. I will change for you, I'm changing for you. I don't even find anyone attractive anymore," he started talking nonstop while I placed a hand on my stomach, feeling sick, and stepped away from him to sit next to the fire.

"Helanie," he said my name, reaching me and sitting in front of me.

"Such habits never die. If you're built in a way that you can't stop having different women in your life, I think today or tomorrow, when you get bored of me, you would repeat your behavior again," I complained softly, keeping my tone respectful as I hated judging others.

But I wasn't judging him. I was just trying to protect myself. To save myself from another heartbreak.

"I understand. Whatever you said is completely true and accurate, but I am a changed man now. You know what, here," he pulled his phone out of his pocket and gave it to me.

"Come on, do the research. Go through every app and every place, and if you can find a single text from a girl, I will admit in front of everyone that I am a piece of shit," he insisted as he made me hold his phone in my hands.

"Just give me a chance. People do change. The ones who have found their soulmate, they change," he finished, his eyes telling me that he wasn't lying.

"Give me a chance, just one chance," he kept requesting, and at this point, I felt like I was being too harsh on him.

I can always keep an eye out and then make a decision. Just because he had been a certain way in the past doesn't mean he would be again.

Especially when looking at myself. I was such a desperate person. I would take all sorts of crap from everyone just to please them and make sure they were on my side.

For me, it was trauma. What if for him, it is love that changes him?

"It's okay. I want to believe you," my words brought a smile of relief to his lips.

"Thank you, I will never break your trust," he uttered, leaning in and pressing his lips against mine.

This time, there was no fear in my heart of anyone who could bother us. The gentleness of his lips made me suck his lower lip while he wrapped his arm around my body and pulled me closer, making me slide into his lap.

The fire helped us get cozy, with him sucking my upper lip like he had been hungry for years. His lips moved in such a perfect motion.

His fingers tangled in my hair as his mouth explored mine passionately, and little moans escaped my lips into his mouth. There was no space left between our bodies as I sat in his lap, tasting his lips.

He ignited something in me that I never thought I had been missing for so long.

My hands slid up to his neck, my fingers tangling in his hair as he pulled me even closer, as if there was any space left between us.

After kissing each other hungrily for a while, I was the one who decided to slowly break the kiss. There were things I needed to take care of before going any further with him.

"We should head back home now," I smiled against his lips, his thumb pressing on my bottom lip.

"Do we really have to?" he pouted, giving my lips another quick peck. As I nodded, he tossed me onto the ground and came on top of me

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

Chapter 299-Throwing My Friend Under The Bus

Chapter 299: 299-Throwing My Friend Under The Bus

Helanie:

"Maximus," I laughed, feeling him smell my neck while planting small kisses all over my skin.

"I can't get enough of you," he raised his face and said, his eyes locked on my lips.

"Hey!" he suddenly pulled away from me as if he remembered something. The next thing I know, he's taking something out of his pocket.

"I got you this," he held up a pink diamond, beautifully set in a gold chain.

"This is a rare kind," I asked, and he shrugged.

"You are a rare kind," he said quickly, moving behind me and shifting my hair to one side. I didn't want to accept such an expensive gift, so I placed my hand on his to stop him.

"What? You can accept gifts from Emmet but not me?" His comment hit hard. I turned to glare at him, and he quickly bit his tongue.

"Sorry! I thought it would land well, and you'd accept my gift," he said, looking down, trying to appear so sad that I couldn't help but feel touched.

"Fine, but no more gifts," I warned as I sat upright.

"That's not possible. I'll spoil you so much that the one night I don't give you anything, you'll beat me up," he joked, making me laugh at how adorably sly he could be.

The pendant did look amazing on me. However, as he sat in front of me and admired it, he frowned a little.

"Take off your pendant. I want mine to shine on your neck right now," his request left me frozen for a moment. Every time someone asked me to take off my pendant, I felt like I was back in that subway again.

"Maximus—," I looked down, touching the pendant.

"Okay, no worries. Mine still looks more beautiful on you," he said, not forcing me to remove it and sparing me from revisiting my trauma through my actions.

"Shall we go now?" I asked again.

"Yeah, I don't want my queen to freeze to death. Your cheeks are so red," he acknowledged that despite having the fire going, it was getting chillier. The wind wasn't helping the fire either.

He put out the fire while calling someone to take care of the decorations. Then, he wrapped his arms around me and walked me out of the woods.

"I still can't believe I have you in my arms," he whispered, once again showing how amazed he was, pulling me closer to his chest. Walking with him like that felt so safe and comforting.

We kept talking about different things, mainly him talking about how much he wanted us to get married or accept each other throughout the walk.

He was never the shy type, but sometimes he could be a little too bold. For example, when he made a comment about how he thinks I'll be blushing red the day I stand completely naked in front of him.

That comment alone made my cheeks turn red. Once inside the mansion, we went our separate ways. I had eaten too much cake, so I didn't have any room left in my stomach for dinner.

Then, I was tired from the lessons, so I wanted to sleep early to make sure I could get up early and leave for the meetup.

As planned, I woke up early, changed into my uniform, and headed out of the mansion to catch a car. Maximus had asked his driver to drop me off while he had to finish some things before coming to the academy.

I had even forgotten about the trouble I had to face from Rayden. Once I got out of the car and hadn't even entered the academy yet, Rayden caught me off guard. He stepped in my way and motioned for me to follow him to the side of the building where we could speak without anyone seeing us.

"What is it? You can talk here. There isn't anyone around—" I looked around and exclaimed. Some of the students were already inside the academy, while others were still on their way.

Lamar was on his way, and I was hoping he would come in time.

"Just shut up and follow me," Rayden grabbed my arm and pulled me behind his car instead since I refused to go behind the building with him.

He pushed my back against his car and placed his hands around me, trapping me.

It wasn't good. Every time I was in close proximity with him, I felt my body getting cold and numb.

"Now tell me, you visited me in the hospital, didn't you?" he pressed. Of course, he wasn't going to back down from his claims.

"Tell me," he almost yelled before getting himself under control, probably out of fear that anyone would see us like this, with him scaring me.

"You want to know the truth? The truth is that I didn't. I was home the whole time. Do you think the trainers wouldn't have asked the warriors if I had left? You were under heavy drugs and medication; you probably just thought I visited you," I said it so confidently that he zoned out again.

Of course, the brothers didn't bother asking the warriors because I sounded so convincing to them. And me going with Norman to Rayden also proved that I wasn't lying.

"Okay—," he grunted, "is there anything you want to tell me now?" He raised his head again, warning me to finally admit if I was lying.

"I'm not hiding anything from you. If anything—you should—" I paused and closed my eyes. I had to do this. I needed to divert his attention from me and make him angry. "But you should be asking that question to your mate."

His facial expression changed as he narrowed his eyes at me at the mention of Jenny. "How dare you say her name."

There was a threat in his tone, but I wasn't backing down. "I'm not lying. I know she told you that she only slept with Lamar once, but that's not true. The two of them slept together again—" I watched his face change colors.

"You're lying," he hissed, ready to probably throw a fist at me, so I had to rush and show him the evidence.

I pulled up Lamar's text and turned the screen to him. "She visited him in his pack, and the two of them slept together in his motel room."

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

Chapter 300-Deadly Viper On The Loose

Chapter 300: 300-Deadly Viper On The Loose

Helanie:

"I can't believe this, I'm going to hurt someone," Rayden hissed, his fist touching his mouth as he bit it angrily.

"I'm not telling you all this to fight someone. I'm just saying that--this whole situation is making Lamar do dumb things. Now he wants to put snakes in your locker. If you can just be careful and avoid the locker, it could save Lamar from making a mistake. Because if the deadly viper bites you and something happens, the investigation will start and Lamar will be in trouble. I don't want my friend to be in trouble," I said in a pleading tone. He was glaring at the texts where Lamar had said he would put a deadly viper in his locker.

"Go get out of here before I hurt you," Rayden pointed to the space, and I quickly got to my feet. I rushed away from him and entered the academy. Everyone was asked to go to the hall where Emmet would come and talk to us.

The brothers would arrive shortly. Jenny and our whole class were there except for three people: Lucy, Lamar, and--Gavin!

Where was Gavin? I hadn't seen him in a while. As I looked around, my eyes landed on Salem, who had been watching me. After our eye contact was made, she strolled over to me.

"Have you seen Gavin? He hasn't been responding to my calls or texts ever since the last day of academy," she sounded so concerned as she kept fidgeting with her fingers and complaining.

"I haven't spoken with him," I replied in a slightly guilty tone. I knew what he did to Lucy was wrong, and I was upset about how their relationship had turned toxic. But completely ignoring him wasn't what a friend should do.

"Is he okay? There's no sign of him. There's no activity on any of his accounts either," she looked so worried, unlike what I thought she would be like.

Did she really like Gavin, or what?

"I'll contact him to check on him," I gave her a nod, not showing much friendly behavior toward her.

"Okay, thank you," she kept her voice low and her eyes on the ground as she walked away. I held my phone to my ear while dialing Gavin's number, but his phone was turned off.

"Hm, that's weird," I frowned at the screen.

"What is?" Jenny, arriving from the other corner of the hall, wasn't something I had expected. Her brother was nowhere in sight, so I'm guessing he was with Ryaden.

"Gavin hasn't responded to anyone or stayed in contact with anyone," I was so confused about where he might have gone. I hoped he didn't get himself into trouble after Lucy's fall. I could understand why he might have thought it was his fault.

"I haven't spoken with him either. Did you ask Lamar? Maybe he had--" she stopped herself after realizing there was no way Lamar and Gavin would speak.

"Hmm, I just hope and wish Gavin is okay," a sigh left my lips, but soon Lamar arrived, and I gestured for him to join us. He was all smiles until his eyes landed on Jenny, and his mood soured. I could guess why that might have happened.

She had done him wrong. After giving him so many hopes, she just went back to her mate, who she had only talked badly about.

"Hey," Lamar greeted me.

"Hi Lamar, how are you?" Jenny jumped in with a bright smile covering her lips.

"Good," he didn't even look her way and focused on me. "Sorry for the other day."

He mouthed the words to me, and my smile for him was a sign that everything was cool between us.

"You know, Gavin hasn't been responding to anyone," I understood what Jenny was trying to do. She wanted Lamar to relax with her and start talking to her like before. But I guess that wasn't something Lamar was interested in. He had been ditched by her, so he was avoiding her completely.

"Helanie, are you okay? I mean, Gavin not being in contact with anyone?" Lamar once again focused his attention on me and ignored Jenny, whose face started to fall.

"I'm fine. I'll call him again and leave some texts too," I said to Lamar. I couldn't blame him for not talking to Jenny. She messed up.

While we waited for the trainers to arrive, there was some commotion outside the hall that kind of got everyone's attention. A few of them screamed in panic, as nobody knew what was going on. We rushed to check the noises, and it was just as I had expected.

Rayden had his friends, including Penn, on a mission to find something.

"Search everywhere!" Rayden yelled, a weapon in his hand. It was a gun with silver bullets.

As everyone saw him shoot around the corners, they started to scream and scramble away.

"Nobody panic, I've got everything under control," Rayden shouted. Penn came out of one of the rooms with just a stick in his hand and grunted.

"You do?" The uncertainty in his voice caused Rayden to glare him down. "No, Rayden, I'm serious. You've lost your mind. And why the heck did you bring a weapon to the academy?" Penn was yelling at him, just as confused as everyone else.

"I'm telling you, the deadly viper is somewhere around. It escaped from my locker," the minute he announced that, gasps rippled through the air.

The steps got louder as everyone started to rush out of the academy.

"I will go check it on the second floor," Rayden yelled, but by that point, his friends and Penn seemed to have lost faith in him.

"That's it!" Penn threw the stick to the ground. "Jenny, Helanie! Come with me," Penn saw us through the crowd, sticking to the wall with Lamar standing before us, his arms spread to make sure nobody hurt us while trying to push through. It was getting bad.

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