

# Claimed And Marked By Her Stepbrother Mates

## Chapter 61-The Wet Prince

### Chapter 61: 61-The Wet Prince

#### Helanie:

After Kaye left, I couldn't stay awake for food and decided to rest. The moment I lay down in bed, a suffocating sensation overwhelmed me. It felt as if someone were drowning me—I could swear I felt my hair getting wet.

I forced my eyes open, and to my surprise, I was no longer in the bed I had just settled into. Darkness surrounded me, and my body was half-submerged in cold water.

"Where am I?" I muttered, my voice echoing back to me in the empty space.

As I raised my head, I spotted a faint light above. It dawned on me—I was trapped in a well.

The air was cold and damp as I pressed my back against the slimy stone wall.

"Huh! How did... I get here?" I stammered, feeling the frantic rise and fall of my chest. The well was narrow, just wide enough for me to stretch out my arms and feel the rough, wet stones on either side.

"Somebody, please help me," I whimpered, my voice barely audible. The small circle of light above illuminated only the upper portion of the well, while darkness gaped beneath my feet. The walls seemed to close in tighter with every shallow breath I took. My chest tightened as I noticed a figure standing at the top.

It was a familiar face. He looked disheveled, holding the well's heavy cover in his hands. Was he the one who put me here?

It had to be him.

He was definitely closing the lid.

"Norman! No!" I screamed so loud that it jolted me awake.

I couldn't believe what I had just seen. Norman, throwing me into a well? Was it... just a nightmare, or was this a warning to be cautious around him?

I gasped again, desperate for air, but it felt as if I couldn't get enough. The memory of the dream was too real, too vivid. The sensation of being trapped in that well lingered painfully in my mind.

"Helanie!" I nearly jumped as I saw Kaye standing in the doorway. He must have woken up when I started screaming in my sleep.

I stared at his face in silence as he came closer and sat beside me, his gaze scanning my face intently.

"I was in—" I tried to speak, thinking I'd calmed down, but my breath hitched, and I began to hyperventilate again.

"Shh, it's okay. It was just a dream." His voice was low and soothing, though it barely cut through my panic. His eyes shone in the dim light of the bedside lamp.

"He... he threw me in the well. He wanted to trap me there—" My voice faltered, and tears stung my eyes as I recalled his face.

"Who? Who threw you into the well?" Kaye's gaze locked onto mine, leaning in closer, his eyes intent. The intensity woke me up fully, snapping me back to the present.

I pulled back instinctively, taking deep, steadying breaths. He was kind to me today, but who knows how he'll act once I'm back on my feet. People like the broken ones; it's when the miserable raise their heads that they start to disturb others.

"I'm fine. It was just a nightmare," I said, clearing my throat as I covered my face with my hands, rubbing away the remnants of sleep and panic.

"Was it Lamar? Don't worry—he won't come near you again." Slowly, I uncovered my face, surprised by how confidently Kaye reassured me. Did I believe him?

No.

If there's anyone I can rely on, it's me. I have to be the one to protect myself.

"Helanie—I want to know—" He was frowning, studying my face, but just then, his phone rang, interrupting us.

He glanced at the screen, and his expression changed; he shot up from the bed as if he'd seen a ghost.

"Mom? How are you?" he said, answering the call with an uneasy smile.

They'd never talked much about their mother, but I knew they loved her. They hadn't been able to accept my mother as their father's new wife, not even after all this time.

"Oh, alright. I'll be there as soon as I can," he replied, hanging up. He didn't turn back to look at me right away, dialing another number quickly.

"Emmet, Mom called. She wants me to come over. Where are you?" His fingers fidgeted as he bit his nails, an anxious look shadowing his face.

I didn't understand why a call from his mother would make him so nervous.

"Oh, that's good. I need to leave soon," he mumbled, sounding somewhat relieved, though he still paced around the room, wiping his mouth nervously.

"Thank you. Bye." He ended the call with a barely audible murmur, then seemed to remember where he was, glancing at me with a faint, broken smile.

"Um, Emmet will be here in a few minutes. I have to go," he said, his tone uneasy as he turned to leave. But just as he reached the doorway, he spun around, as though remembering something, and spoke in a voice almost too vulnerable to recognize.

"Please... take care of yourself."

He was soon out of my sight, but I kept remembering the way he had looked at me. I lay down for a few minutes, but then I heard the front door open. I managed to get out of bed to see who it was.

I knew who it had to be.

It had to be Emmet.

I wasn't mistaken. I walked out of my room but couldn't make it all the way through the living room because my body still felt weak.

The entire house was shrouded in darkness, with the thunderstorm illuminating parts of it. I watched a dark figure enter and close the door behind him.

The light flickered on, illuminating Emmet's face, and my breath hitched. He was drenched from the rain, and the first thing he did upon entering was start unbuttoning his wet shirt.

He flicked on the side table lamp and casually placed his phone down while opening his shirt with one hand.

I wanted to make my presence known, but I was stunned as he took off his shirt, revealing his chiseled physique.

He was incredibly muscular, adorned with tattoos that didn't cover his entire body. A large tattoo of a sword ran down the center of his chest, and there was something written along his ribs.

"Oh!" The moment he finally noticed me, I gasped and quickly looked away.

This was going to be awkward now.

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

## Chapter 62-My Dear Mother

### Chapter 62: 62-My Dear Mother

**Norman:**

"I heard what happened at the examination grounds." Her blue eyes shifted toward me as she held the teacup with grace. Even after everything that had transpired, she maintained her poise. Her posture was always upright, and her demeanor was stern.

"Two candidates committed a crime and then lied to Maximus McQuoid," I used the words the others had been employing when discussing that incident.

"Hm, and you got them expelled?" She tilted her head, her eyes questioning.

"Arrested! We cannot allow such dangerous creatures to roam freely," I replied, refusing to take the teacup that her royal beta had been holding for me.

Mr. Larry Taboida had been friends with her since childhood. But when my mother left the pack, he was left behind. Now that my mother was back in her pack and serving as alpha queen, she had hired him to work for her.

"Norman! Who is the victim, and why isn't she in the hospital, but rather in the farmhouse that you brothers share?" I knew my mother would bring it up. She had information on all of us; her trusted men kept an eye on us, but we never confronted her about it.

It was a mother worried about her sons, right?

"Since you know she is staying at our farmhouse, I'm sure you must know who she is," I replied, shaking my head. Mr. Larry pulled his hand back, but my mother grabbed the teacup and offered it to me herself this time.

Her light blue dress looked like a summer breeze, and her hair flowed in the wind coming through the window.

I had been informed by Mr. Larry that my mother wanted to see me, so I had to leave everything behind and hurry over. She had called for Kaye too, so I knew what she wanted to discuss with us.

"Ursula's daughter? I heard she came to stay with you for a while but then left, and now she's participating in the academy?" There was a bitterness in her tone; I knew she wouldn't want her in our academy.

"She wouldn't pass the tests. There's no need to worry." I accepted the teacup and noticed my mother watching me drink from it.

"Yet she is in the farmhouse. Anyway, I didn't bring you here to talk about some useless creature or a gold digger's daughter. I'm here to make a suggestion." She straightened her back, playing with the black diamond on her finger. It was a rare gem, just like my mother—she was rare too.

"Hi, I'm sorry I'm late!" That's when Kaye barged in, anxious and flustered. I hated how my mother's presence made him feel. He was always on edge around her, constantly worried about doing something wrong. It wasn't just the big things; even a cough from him would upset her.

"It's nothing new," my mother said with a bright smile, attempting to play it off, but her comment must have stung Kaye.

"It's alright. You've been really helpful these past few days." I quickly defended him, but my mother's eye roll was disheartening.

"Mom! I left the minute you called—" Kaye had a smile on his lips as he turned to Lady Darcy Katz, but she was so imposing that she didn't even acknowledge him and instead interrupted.

"Release the two students." She leaned back, crossing one leg over the other and watching us for a reaction.

"Huh? Sydney and Lamar? They have committed a heinous crime. If they are given a chance today, they will do it again, thinking they're invincible." Kaye looked so passionate when discussing what was right that it honestly made me feel guilty for not doing the same.

"Oh! Kaye has decided to start focusing on the right things and not play in the grass anymore?" My mother's comment made Larry turn toward us and laugh along with her.

"They are treasures, not some grass," I stated loudly, wiping the smile off Larry's face.

"Whatever." My mother used a rough tone. "But release those two. You don't have any proof. Besides, do you know who Sydney's father is? He is a royal beta of the Blood Hunters' pack and also the biggest investor in my jewelry company." My mother's eyes lingered on Kaye, who looked incredibly uncomfortable hearing her demand for Sydney and Lamar's release from custody.

"Mom! The victim is awake and—" I watched Kaye trying to explain, but my mother shook her head.

"So? Make her go back to sleep then." Her words sent a shudder through Kaye's body right in front of my eyes and I felt a little pain in my heart.

"You're not going to cause so much trouble for the sake of that rogue, wolfless slut, are you? Do you know the alpha of the Blood Hunters' pack has been putting so much pressure on us? And by the way, must I remind you of the rules? Rogues that are not part of the academy are pretty much vulnerable and not the responsibility of anyone. Even if she dies, Lamar and Sydney cannot be held accountable."

I was struck with shock when my mother explained that rule to us. The rogues who are not part of our mansion or academy do not fall under any rules. They are rogues, and they have no security or protection. I knew the rule, I just forgot about it.

I wanted to defend my brother Kaye, but it was a significant rule, and if the alpha of the Blood Hunters' pack defended his beta's daughter, we would be called out for breaking it.

"So, I hope you don't want the alpha and the royal beta to send their warriors after this rogue girl. Because there will be no rule that will keep her safe from their wrath. So silently withdraw the charges and avoid embarrassing yourself and me," my mother said, looking straight into Kaye's eyes. I knew she was taking control of him.

Kaye would rather commit a crime himself than upset our mother. The shocking part was that even though I didn't like Helanie at all, I felt a sense of wrongness in that moment when Kaye sighed and gave up.

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

## **- Chapter 63-A Perfect Man!**

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## Chapter 63: 63-A Perfect Man!

**Helanie:**

"I'm sorry," I said, turning around to give him some privacy as he pulled another shirt from the bag he carried with him. Just a few days ago I was deeply hated by these brothers. But now they were taking turns taking care of me? Or was it because they felt guilty or responsible for someone from the shelter attacking the other candidate?

"Did I wake you up? Sorry, I didn't realize I was being so loud," he murmured softly in his deep, raspy voice.

"No, it's fine. I... I haven't been able to fall back asleep since waking up from a nightmare," I admitted, waiting for him to finish changing.

He stepped up behind me, gently tapped two fingers on my shoulder, then walked past. That was his casual way of letting me know he was done.

I turned around just in time to see him untie his hair and give it a quick shake, freeing the loose strands.

"Then let me make you something to eat; you must be starving," he offered, heading to the kitchen and pulling out some bread.

I walked over slowly, taking a seat at the counter while he cracked some eggs and began whisking them.

"Can I ask you something?" I couldn't hold back my curiosity any longer.

He was so different, so distinct. I wondered why he wasn't on his brother's side.

"Go ahead," he said, leaning over the pan with his head lowered but his eyes locked on mine. His large hands rested on the counter, steady and strong.

"Do you have a mate?" Asking him this felt strange, but I couldn't stop myself.

It wasn't that I wanted him to claim me—I was just curious. Being acknowledged and loved by my mate was far from my priorities.

Besides, I had felt a mate bond with his brother too. But since it happened only in a dream, and I didn't have a wolf to confirm it, I might never know what that experience truly meant.

"Nope!" he replied, drawing out the "p" with emphasis.

"And I don't want to find one. I believe in soulmates more than in a mate bond," he said, surprising me with the distinction he made between the two.

"But... isn't a mate supposed to be a soulmate?" I asked, watching him as he squinted one eye slightly and shook his head.

"For many, I just don't believe in it," he said as he began assembling the sandwich. I found myself zoning out.

Could it be that we shared a dislike for the Moon Goddess? Was that why he rejected what she had chosen for him?

"And you? Do you want to find your mate?" he asked, sliding the plate towards me. I stared down at the sandwich and scrambled eggs. They looked delicious.

How was he so perfect?

"I don't have a wolf," I replied, hoping it would suffice as an excuse.

"But that doesn't mean you can't feel a mate bond for the first time. Just make sure it's a full moon, and you get some physical contact with your mate. Maybe try going to a full moon ball and dancing around," he said casually, taking a bite from his own sandwich.

Of course, he knew everything. Did I really think I could deceive him? He knew all about wolves and how they could sense a mate bond, even when their wolf was dormant.

Shifting uncomfortably in my seat, I took a bite of the scrambled eggs. "Since you're a trainer and professor at the academy, you must have come across many individuals without wolves. Has any of them ever found their wolves?" I didn't know what I was hoping to hear, as the academy rarely admitted such students.

"Hmm, not at the university, but outside of it, yes," he nodded, leaning over his plate with his hands on the counter. His hair was so healthy—it shone beautifully.

"And?" I prompted.

"Honestly, they usually found their wolves before turning twenty," he replied, his words lifting my spirits.

I didn't say anything after that, focusing on my meal in silence.

"You'll get your wolf one day, Helanie. But you have to work for it, maybe even make sacrifices," he said thoughtfully. "Sometimes, wishes only come true if you're willing to let go of something you love most."



His words took me by surprise. When I looked up, I found him staring off at the wall, lost in thought.

That's when his phone ringing finally snapped him out of his daze. He shook his head slightly, then picked it up, leaning one hand on the counter as he stared at the screen before answering.

"I'm listening," he said, stepping out of the kitchen.

"I had a feeling they'd take that route," I heard him say, his voice trailing off until it faded completely.

Oddly enough, I was feeling much better. The brothers had truly done their best to take care of me.

A few minutes after I'd finished my food, I saw Emmet return, a disappointed expression on his face. He slid his phone onto the counter, and it barely stopped at the edge. I could tell something bad had happened, something that was really bothering him.

"Is everything okay?" I asked. He sighed, his hands resting heavily on the counter, his broad frame leaning over it.

"They had to let Lamar and Sydney go. Rogues who aren't linked to the mansion or the academy don't get any protection, so any crime against them isn't really considered a crime," he said, a bitter edge in his voice, clearly upset by the news.

I wasn't only disappointed—I was afraid, too. But I kept a calm expression, not wanting to show how much it disturbed me.

"It's alright. I just wanted them to acknowledge that a crime was committed," I said, keeping my posture straight as he looked at me in surprise.

"Helanie, it's okay to show disappointment, to be angry," he said gently, his voice so soft that I couldn't help but give him a small smile.

"I'll be fine. Once I'm at the academy, I'll be safe," I replied confidently. He nodded, almost proudly, as though he admired my optimism.

But now, more than ever, I was determined to see this through.

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

# Chapter 64-Unfair World

## Chapter 64: 64-Unfair World

**Helanie:**

"We've been so worried about you. We wanted to come see you, but no one would tell us which hospital you were at," Lucy said, holding my hand tightly, as she had since I arrived. I'd returned after a week. My injuries have healed, but the mental stress has only added to my concerns.

"I'm much better now," I replied, not wanting to tell her that I'd actually been at my stepbrother's farmhouse. I've learned not to trust anyone with my secrets. If my stepbrothers hadn't shared my location, I probably shouldn't either.

After Emmet explained the plan, he was asked to leave to handle some academy issues, leaving me alone at the farmhouse with the doctors and nurses. The new medical team was quite decent, making sure my comfort was their top priority.

This morning, a warrior escorted me to the shelter. I'd heard they were resuming the examinations today.

"Those two should never have been let out of prison," Gavin muttered, shaking his head as he watched Salem walk out of the bathroom, freshly dressed for the exam.

"Excuse me? And why not? They didn't break any rules," she shrugged, her eyes narrowing as they fell on me, filled with hostility and irritation.

"But they hurt someone. Those rules exist for a reason—rules are there to keep animals in check. If someone attacks a rogue, they're no better than animals," Gavin argued, prompting Salem to roll her eyes and pick up the curling iron.

She grabbed a section of her hair and began curling it with the hot iron rod in her hand. "And did you ever think about what all this has done to my sister's reputation? She was in prison. For the Goddess' sake, she didn't even have her makeup with her. Just the idea of her sleeping without her skincare routine freaks me out."

It was, unfortunately, pretty common for people like her to act this way. I didn't expect anything else from her.

"Anyway, I'm fine now, and I'm ready for the exam," I said, pointedly ignoring that woman and trying to focus on the two people who were actually being kind to me.

"Then let's head out—the trainers are here," Gavin said, glancing at his phone. My heart skipped a beat at the thought of facing Lamar and Sydney again.

I followed behind them, dressed in the same brown tracksuit that Lucy had given me earlier. She'd washed it clean, and I was grateful for her thoughtfulness.

Once we stepped onto the training grounds outside the shelter, I noticed the seats arranged neatly for the audience. The brothers were finally arriving.

They were all dressed in black for some reason, with a group of warriors standing behind them—Lamar and Sydney among them. My stomach twisted at the sight, and I quickly lowered my head, taking a deep breath to steady myself.

When the group reached the platform near the brothers, Norman took the lead.

"These two were imprisoned for a reason. Unfortunately, the laws don't fully apply to rogues. But that doesn't mean we'll tolerate such behavior again. These two candidates have been given another chance, and this will be their last. If they're caught—" Norman paused, seeming to recognize the unfairness of the situation. At the very least, they could have been banned from the academy.

"If they're caught again, they'll be expelled."

As he finished, Salem cheered, clearly thrilled to be reunited with her sister. But Sydney kept her head down, unwilling even to look up.

"However, Lamar and Sydney will no longer be eligible to compete for Alpha King status. Sydney may train here, but without any guarantee of ever achieving the royal beta rank she wanted, and the same goes for Lamar. Neither will be allowed to become Alphas or royal betas," he announced, and I finally looked up.

The way Lamar clenched his jaw and closed his eyes made it clear that this punishment stung. Sydney covered her face in her hands and began to sob.

"If you don't want this to be your future, you're free to withdraw from the exam and join an academy that tolerates such behavior," Norman hissed, his gaze sharp.

I noticed the brothers exchange a relieved look. The way Norman turned to them, his shoulders squaring, made it clear that his motives weren't entirely about justice—or about me. He was doing this for his brothers.

"So, what's your decision?" he asked the two of them, right before the exam began. Both looked visibly drained, likely from a sleepless night filled with regrets.

But this was what they deserved for their cruelty.

"I'll stay," Lamar sighed, his voice thick with guilt. He kept his eyes down, avoiding my gaze.

Sydney, however, stared right at me and said firmly, "I'll stay."

"Well then, let's begin with your apologies to the victim," Kaye stepped forward, gesturing for the two to apologize to me.

Lamar took the initiative, stepping towards me. Although every instinct told me to step back, I forced myself to hold my ground. "I'm sorry. I don't know what I was thinking... Honestly, I wasn't thinking at all. What I did was inhumane. If I could, I'd apologize to you every day. Please, forgive me."

There was a sincerity in his voice, a guilt that sounded genuine. But it didn't soften my heart. I stayed silent, waiting as Sydney approached.

"I'm sorry. I was drunk," she muttered, her tone laced with attitude, which made me groan in frustration.

"No, you weren't," I snapped. My comment sent a ripple of silence through the room. All eyes turned to her, waiting for a response. But it was Salem who stepped forward.

"You should have a little empathy—" she began, but her words were cut off sharply by Emmet.

"That's enough, Salem. I sincerely hope you're not suggesting that a victim should have compassion for the people who tried to kill her." His harsh tone stunned everyone into silence.

Salem looked thoroughly humiliated, but Emmet wasn't finished.

"And next time, don't act like you're everyone's grandmother. Go back to your seat," he yelled, pointing to the chair at the far end. Salem snatched up her belongings and hurried to the back, thoroughly chastened.

Realizing that the brothers were waiting for a genuine apology, Sydney took a deep breath and tried again. "I'm sorry. Please, forgive me."

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

## **Chapter 65-From My Experience**

## Chapter 65: 65-From My Experience

### Helanie:

The chaos finally ended, and we sat down for the exam. I hadn't realized it would be a verbal examination.

Each of us was given five questions, and whoever scored the highest would come in first. The first round focused on herbs and plants, and to my surprise, the others weren't doing so well. Most of them barely managed to answer three out of five questions correctly, except for Salem, who scored four. Now it was my turn.

Kaye returned to my seat, his eyes lingering on my notebook for a moment before he shook his head and resumed the examination. He began asking me questions, and I nailed four of them. Unfortunately, I didn't get the fifth one right. Now, it was a tie between Salem and me.

I had already passed the exam, but I wanted to score the highest, so I was thrilled about the tie-breaker round.

"Both of you, come here and stand in front of everyone," Emmet instructed, gesturing at a spot before the group.

My heart was pounding so hard I thought I might faint. Salem looked confident, while Kaye had been watching me intently. I couldn't help but wonder what kind of question he'd ask. Knowing the brothers well, I suspected that Norman had probably whispered something ridiculous to Kaye, just to throw me off and make me lose.

They had a quick exchange when they saw Salem and me tied.

"The question is..." Kaye announced, his eyes shifting briefly from me to Salem before returning to me, "Which rose induces a profound coma and dream-like hallucinations?"

The second he said it, I sprang to my feet, ready to answer.

"Pink!" Salem shouted first, but she was wrong.

"Kaye turned to me, almost demanding that I answer. "Helanie?"

"It's the purple rose—the one that traps its victim in a prison of dreams," I replied confidently. As I spoke, I noticed a faint smile on Kaye's lips, as though he had chosen that question on purpose.

The defeated look on Salem's face was satisfying to see. I turned to the crowd, catching Lucy and Gavin giving me a thumbs-up, though Sydney had her arms folded tightly over

her chest. Naturally, she wasn't pleased. Lamar, on the other hand, kept his expression neutral.

"Congratulations—" Emmet began, flashing his usual charming smile, but before he could finish, Norman and Maximus exchanged a look and shook their heads.

"These two have done a great job. How about we give Salem one more question? If she can't answer and Helanie does, only then will we make a final decision. This time, I'll ask the question." I knew Norman wasn't thrilled about me taking the lead.

"Making up your own rules, brother?" Emmet scoffed, but he masked it with a sarcastic smile.

Norman merely grunted and asked Kaye to step aside. I knew exactly why—Norman suspected Kaye had asked that last question knowing I'd answer it in a heartbeat.

Now, Norman stood before us, his hands tucked into the pockets of his black pants, his fitted black shirt straining against his build. There was a glint in his eye, almost challenging me, as if to say, \*Let's see how you win this time.\*

"What is the effect of a lush green herb?" he asked. The moment he spoke, my mind flashed back to a day I had sniffed the purple rose. I recalled a bottle labeled with the herb's effect.

"It's called the Flame of Lust. It puts a creature into a state of heat," I answered, barely pausing to take a breath. The look on Norman's face said it all.

Behind him, I noticed Kaye and Emmet exchanging wide smiles.

"Damn it!" Salem muttered under her breath as her sister rushed to comfort her. She knew I had won from the slight nod Norman gave me. He didn't even bother to congratulate me; instead, he turned away to join his brothers.

As Lucy and Gavin ran over to give me a group hug, I caught Salem and Sydney glaring at us. Lamar simply sat in silence, his eyes fixed on me, though this time, they held no hint of anger.

"If you're all done celebrating, we need to start the second exam," Norman announced, his tone tight. For someone who was supposed to be impartial, he seemed visibly annoyed. I could've sworn he was muttering under his breath, too.

Kaye stepped between us, facing the students while Salem and I faced each other. We both tilted our heads back to meet his gaze—he was so tall that we had to crane our necks to look him in the eye.

"Ask them the toughest question you can come up with. Whoever answers first and correctly will be the winner," Norman stated. Kaye closed his eyes, taking a deep breath. I could feel my nerves mounting.

We returned to our seats, and this time it was Emmet who had prepared a set of questions related to weapons. He began firing them off in a fast-paced, quiz-style format, forcing us to answer quickly. I did my best, racing to keep up with each question until we reached the final one. Whoever answered this last question correctly would be declared the winner.

I wanted this victory so badly.

Glancing over Emmet's shoulder, I noticed the brothers arguing in the background. It was clear that Norman was frustrated. But Kaye caught my eye and gave me an encouraging nod, urging me to stay focused. Then, looking back at Emmet, I realized he was pausing slightly, making sure I was ready. I returned his gaze with a small nod of my own.

At that, Emmet proceeded to give us the final question.

"What mark does a weapon touched by a devil have?" he asked, his voice steady. Immediately, I recalled a conversation with Maximus about weapon markings. This was how I'd managed to score so well, but now I needed to get this last answer right.

Without hesitation, I shot to my feet and answered, loud and clear, "A bone-like pattern!"

The defeated look on Norman's face confirmed my victory. With a proud and cheerful smile, Emmet declared, "Helanie got it right."

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

## **Chapter 66-Are They My Friends?**

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#### **Helanie:**

I felt as if I'd grown wings. My heart swelled with pride and joy, a feeling so rare I couldn't recall the last time I'd felt this way. The moment Emmet announced I had achieved the highest scores in both tests, I jumped up and hugged Lucy, who had

already run toward me, arms outstretched. Gavin quickly joined, and we all shared a group hug that felt like home.

I have never had friends before or someone who would celebrate with my victory. So it meant the world when those two cheered for me.

As I looked around, I saw Kaye clapping steadily, Emmet giving me a proud smile, but Maximus and Norman stood silently, their faces unreadable. Why couldn't they be happy for the candidate?

After we celebrated, the brothers left, while the rest of us headed back inside the shelter. The sisters didn't stick around, though; I wasn't sure where they went to spend their time, but I was relieved not to have to face them again.

Gavin and Lucy had ordered pizza to celebrate my victory. They were genuinely thoughtful. For the candidates who came last in this session, a pairing with those who also ranked low in other groups was in store. They would then face another exam, and finally, the candidates who ranked lowest would be let go. That's why finishing the tests mattered so much. What surprised me most was how thrilled Gavin seemed, even though he'd come last in the academic test.

Lamar lay on his mattress, barely moving. I didn't think he was actually asleep, but he was definitely pretending.

"Tomorrow is the final exam. It'll be tough, but I'm certain you'll do great," Lucy said, holding my hand reassuringly.

"What's the test about though?" I asked, realizing that unlike everyone else here, I hadn't trained for months in preparation. Most of them had spent ages gearing up for these exams, while I'd decided on a whim to join the academy.

They say time flies, but for me, it felt as if it had frozen that night. It had been more than a month since that incident, yet it felt like it had only happened yesterday. The faces of those alphas were still vivid in my mind, their mocking laughter and the humiliation still haunting me, no matter how many cheers I received for passing each test.

"All the candidates will be given different colored shirts," Gavin explained, his words making my heart race. "We'll have one hour, and in that time, we need to avoid getting caught. If we're able to catch at least one candidate, we'll rank higher. The one who gets caught will be ranked last. The winner sits out, and the loser—yeah, that's what they call them—is given one more chance. If they get caught again by someone else, they're disqualified. But if they manage to avoid capture the second time, someone else will take their place as the lowest-ranked candidate and will be moved to another shelter to compete against the other lowest-ranked candidates. Which is a final round between all the losers of each shelter"



So all I had to do was avoid getting caught—twice.

"Hey, don't worry; you've got this," Lucy assured me with a smile. She motioned for me to lean in closer to her and Gavin. "We've got a plan."

I leaned in, listening intently.

"Since I've already come last in the previous two exams, if you're the first to get caught, I'll go after Lucy—since she hasn't ranked last before—and bring her to the finish line. That way, you won't be disqualified. Then you and I will end up in the last round together, and I'll help you in the physical rounds and you help me with the educational part," Gavin flashed me a smile, brighter than any I'd seen before.

"Really? You two would do that for me?" I didn't know what came over me, but I found myself breaking out of my shell and talking more freely.

"Of course! We're friends, after all," Lucy cheered, making my eyes misty.

"Thank you so much, you guys. I don't know why you're being so kind to me, but it means the world." I rose and hugged them both, drawing out their laughter.

They were so full of life. Even though I knew they'd been bullied by Sydney and Salem, they still stood up for me. Kaye had told me about it. How I wished I could take a stand against the alphas, but no one would believe me. That's why I couldn't rely on anyone else to pass judgment.

I need to seek justice for myself.

"Now, let's get some rest. Tomorrow is judgment day," Gavin said, giving me a comforting pat on the head like a big brother offering strength.

I went back to my mattress, and sleep took over quickly. When I woke up, I noticed two mattresses were empty—the sisters hadn't spent the night with us. Maybe it was nothing, or maybe it meant they'd rather avoid the sight of me altogether.

I could only imagine the humiliation Sydney must have felt, being locked up. From what her sister said, Sydney hadn't received any special treatment in the prison.

We got ready and assembled outside the shelter, waiting for the brothers to arrive. The two sisters showed up hand in hand, swaying their ponytails as they walked past us, each shooting me a cold, unsettling glare.

Sydney stood right beside me, but Gavin slid between us, giving me some relief. I flashed Gavin a grateful smile as the brothers approached, holding shirts and reminding us of the rules.

While we waited in line, I overheard Sydney murmuring something to her sister. Her words didn't escape my notice.

"Today will be the perfect chance to show certain 'people' what we're capable of," she said, her tone laced with malice. Goosebumps crept up my arms—I had no doubt she meant me.

"Absolutely. Let's win this match and maybe even knock someone out of the list," Salem replied, her gaze directly aimed at me. Their exchange made it clear: they were planning to target me in this round.

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

## **Chapter 67-Such A Loser!**

### **Chapter 67: 67-Such A Loser!**

#### **Helanie:**

I watched as Lamar received a white shirt, Lucy got purple, and then Kaye handed me a green one. It was such a murky green that it would help me blend right into the bushes. He smiled as if he'd picked it out especially to help me.

I wanted to smile back, but my gaze kept shifting to Norman, who was scrutinizing us all, observing every detail.

Then Gavin was given a blue shirt, while Sydney ended up with pink, and Salem was handed a yellow one.

Now, we all stood before the brothers, facing them directly.

"Remember, you have a five-minute head start. Try to separate from each other and stay hidden for one hour. Your time starts now," Norman announced, and everyone began sprinting like mad.

If none of us were caught, the test would continue.

As I started running, I noticed how quickly the others dashed away. It must be so satisfying to move that fast. That's when I glanced back and noticed Sydney trailing behind me.

She was running slowly, almost deliberately, as if she wasn't even trying to hide or escape. That's when it all clicked—she was coming after me.

My heart pounded harder as she picked up speed. I tried to shake her, but she stayed right on my heels. I didn't even realize five minutes had passed until I heard the bells ring in the distance, signaling the start. The first thing Sydney did was close in, scooping me up effortlessly.

I elbowed her, trying to weaken her grip around my waist, but she was letting her wolf strength take over.

I flailed, kicking and twisting my arms, but it was useless. She carried me like a rag doll, racing at a breakneck speed, then tossed me at the brothers' feet.

Only then did I grasp just how fast she was; I'd barely had a moment to resist.

"Ah!" I gasped, trying to stand, but stumbled and landed flat on my but.

"Good job, Sydney; that was fast," Norman said, stepping forward and adjusting his watch with a pleased smile.

Watching him smirk at my defeat infuriated me.

Maximus showed no reaction, but Emmet and Kaye looked disappointed in me. Their expressions were getting easier to read.

"Go on, Helanie. Start the second round. If you get caught again, I believe you know what will happen," Norman said, not even glancing in my direction.

"Aren't we supposed to make an announcement that I've been caught once?" I asked, remembering the plan I'd made with Gavin and Lucy.

However, when Norman turned to me with a sly grin, it felt like my heart twisted painfully in my chest.

"Nope! We've changed the rules this time. No one's getting a chance to cheat," Norman shrugged, and I felt a tremor ripple through me.

"Go!" he barked, and I scrambled to my feet, striding past Sydney, who stood smugly with her hands on her hips. It hurt to see her standing there so confidently after what she'd just done to me.

I took off running again, aiming for the dense, bushy side of the mountain to avoid being spotted. I had no idea how I was going to alert Gavin and Lucy that I'd been caught. Norman must have changed the rules, worried someone might help me.

But just as I left the open area and darted onto a narrow path, someone lunged out from behind a tree, shoving me to the ground with a force far too intense for this round.

"Ugh!" I cried out, pain flaring as I scrambled to my knees. But before I could rise, Salem grabbed me from behind, trapping me in a headlock and dragging me back down.

The world blurred as I felt myself pulled to the ground, watching my dreams of escaping get crushed.

"No!" I hissed, biting down on her arm, which made her release me briefly. I rolled onto my stomach, trying to crawl away, but barely had a second to move before she grabbed my ankles, yanking me back with brutal force.

She was fierce, and I couldn't break free, no matter how hard I tried to hold onto anything in my path.

"Bend your knees and then kick out with all your strength!" a voice called from nearby. I looked up to see Lamar standing a short distance away. Our eyes met, and he began moving toward us. At first, I thought he was coming to help Salem, but as I bent my knees and kicked, she flew backward, landing hard on her back.

Maybe not! Maybe he wasn't here to help her—or was he going to turn me to the trainers himself?

"You—!" Salem spat at Lamar, who shot toward her, scooping her up before she could retaliate. She kicked out, hitting his knee with a sharp blow.

"Ugh!" he grunted, dropping to one knee as he tried to grab her leg. "Get out of here! Run!" he yelled, snapping me out of my daze.

I nodded and tried to get away, but Salem grabbed my leg. We became tangled, struggling against each other. As Lamar finally managed to overpower Salem, she grabbed a fistful of sand and flung it into his eyes.

With Lamar momentarily blinded, she broke free. Before I could react, she punched me hard in the stomach, knocking the wind out of me. I stumbled, and before I knew it, she had thrown me over her shoulder, sprinting away at top speed.

Barely conscious and with pain stabbing through my stomach, I saw Lamar chase after us. He followed until the open training ground came into view. Of course, he couldn't interfere in front of the trainers.

Once again, Salem dumped me at their feet. This time, I scrambled up, furious, and shoved her backward.

"Hey!" she snapped, her expression a mix of anger and triumph.

"No need to be bitter about it," Norman commented, leaning back against the table, his legs stretched out and a nasty smirk on his lips.

Seeing the smug satisfaction on his face made me want to lunge at him next.

"Well, that's it, then," he said, feigning sympathy. "You're no longer a candidate. Why don't you head back to the shelter, collect your things, and leave? We'll be talking to the accepted candidates now. Since you lost, everyone else from this shelter has been accepted, and Gavin will have to complete another test with candidates from the other shelters." Norman sounded all too happy as he explained the rules now that I was out of the list.

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

## **Chapter 68-Knight In A Shining Armour**

### **Chapter 68: 68-Knight In A Shining Armour**

#### **Helanie:**

"Helanie! Wait," Lucy yelled, but I saw Norman gesture for her to stop, keeping her from coming in my direction. I have seen the sadness in her eyes for me.

"Aren't you going to sign the admission form?" I heard Norman ask her. I didn't want to leave, but what else could I do? I had failed the tests.

My heart ached so deeply that I knew if I stayed any longer, I would end up crying like a child. The one goal of my life had been snatched away because of my own weakness. This was all my fault.

I watched as Gavin and the others were loaded onto a bus, headed to the academy where the selected candidates would pay the entry fee, while Gavin would sign up for the backup tests. Going back into the shelter alone felt like a slap to my face—a harsh reminder from the alphas that I was on my own now, with nowhere else to go.

I sat down on my mattress, staring at the wall where Sydney and Salem used to hang so many things. Now, it was bare, a stark hint that they'd left and moved to the academy.

"I couldn't even manage that much," I muttered to myself, covering my face with my hands. I had been holding back tears, trying not to cry like a child, but sometimes, it's okay to let it out.

"You did your best." I looked up at the sound of Emmett's voice. I thought he'd left with his brothers. He wore white pants and a shirt with a long, gray coat.

"I wanted to be part of the academy so badly," I groaned, hunching forward with my elbows on my knees, my face buried in my hands. Emmett looked around for a place to sit, then settled on the edge of the mattress across from mine.

"I know. I've never seen someone so—" he began, but I interrupted him with a scoff.

"Desperate?"

He shook his head and corrected me, "Determined."

"Thanks for being nice, but it doesn't change the fact that I'm still out," I sighed, watching him gently push his coat aside as he slipped his hand into his pocket.

He was a devilishly handsome man, and his rugged demeanor only made him stand out more.

The issue was the mate bond. I wanted to blame the mate bond even though I couldn't feel the pull anymore, and neither could he, especially with the absence of my wolf.

"Don't be too hard on yourself," he said, finally pulling his hand out and revealing a red card. "There might still be a way for you to get into the academy."

My heart skipped a beat, and I looked up to meet his gaze.

"But I failed the last test," I replied, wanting so desperately to believe him, but the reality was clear.

"Actually, there's one more chance. I'm not sure how much it will help, but..." He extended his hand, offering me the card.

It bore the academy's logo, with 'Professor Emmett's Recruit' written on it.

"What's this? How can I use it?" I sat up straight, clutching the card tightly as I looked at him, excitement flickering across my face.

"This is a special card that each of us brothers holds," he explained. "It gives us the right to choose one recruit. If any candidate fails, we can give them this card to present at the backup tests, allowing them to take just one additional test for a chance to re-

enter the academy. But there's a catch." His voice softened, making me rise almost out of anticipation, then settle back down, eager to know what else I'd need to do.

"What's the catch?" I asked.

"This card can only be used by a family member." The word family made my body tense.

"Oh!" I relaxed, though a wave of disappointment surged within me. That stung. I'd raised my hopes for nothing.

"But you can use it," he added, and I looked up to see him smiling in an almost unbothered way. "You are my stepsister."

For some reason, hearing him say that with such a casual smile bothered me. I'd told the Moon Goddess many times that I wouldn't accept any fate she chose for me, yet there was a strange little twinge when Emmett called me his stepsister.

But once that fleeting feeling passed, I sat up straighter, a smile tugging at my lips.

"I can?" I asked, and he nodded.

"Yes, go ahead. Use it. But—" he paused, his tone becoming more serious, "you'll need to use it wisely. Just holding a pass doesn't guarantee admission. You'll have to rely on your skills."

He stood up, having helped me yet again, and I watched him walk away. After a few steps, he stopped briefly and turned back to say, "Best of luck, Helanie. I want to see you in my class soon."

A smile returned to my face, and I held the card tightly, tears of relief filling my eyes. But I had to vacate the shelter quickly; the warriors had arrived to lock it up.

That's when my anxiety spiked. Where would I go now? I knew how dangerous the wilderness was, especially for rogues without a home or any connection to the rogue kings or the academy. Slinging my small bag over my shoulder, I carefully tucked the card away and prepared to leave.

But as soon as I stepped outside, I noticed a warrior pointing at me. I followed him hesitantly as he led me through the trees to the main road.

"Where are you taking me?" I finally asked. I recognized this warrior; he worked for Kaye.

"Young Rogue King Kaye has instructed me to take you to a hotel room and serve as your driver until you find a place of your own." He didn't elaborate, but his words meant a lot to me.

I was in shock as I continued following him. Just when I thought I had no one, someone had been quietly looking out for me.

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

## Chapter 69-The Past Vs Me

### Chapter 69: 69-The Past Vs Me

**Emmet:**

"Kaye!" My steps felt heavy as I walked toward my car. I had seen what happened today, and it filled me with anger. Watching Sydney and Lamar participate felt like witnessing something terrible unfolding right in front of us—while we stood helpless to stop it. That's why I decided to use this moment to bring Helanie's name into association with ours. At the very least, it might help keep her safe.

For now, though, we needed a place for her. I knew Kaye was on the same page. Although we hadn't openly discussed it, we both understood that we didn't mind if she stayed in our lives. We didn't blame her for her mother's actions.

"About Helanie," I said, staring at the hood of my car. I felt the need to calm down. The full moon always left me drained and worn out. My muscles ached intensely, and I could barely work out for two days afterward, yet I still pushed myself.

I've been trying hard to eat well and stay strong. Another full moon had just passed a few days ago, and I'd done my best to prepare for it, but now I was still recovering. I needed to be at my best for every full moon, but I also found myself worrying about that innocent young girl back at the shelter.

"Don't worry, I arranged a hotel room for her. I told the staff to look after her." Thankfully, Kaye was thinking along the same lines and not acting like a bitter child unwilling to share a father.

I understood why my brothers resented her mother, but why take it out on Helanie? Her mother left her when she was only six—how could she possibly be like her? And if we



were to hold grudges, then our father was just as responsible. So why not be angry at him, too? After all, it takes two to tango.

"What about her admission?" Kaye asked, sounding concerned. I was puzzled why he wouldn't just give her his card and introduce her as his stepsister.

"I gave her my pass. I just want to know who's on the test team." I was worried she'd get banned if she didn't use the card correctly.

"Oh, no. Maximus and Norman are on the team," Kaye said, his exhausted tone already hinting that things wouldn't go well for Helanie.

"But why Maximus? Doesn't he want to rest or anything?" I complained as I opened my car door, wincing as I moved. Every little minute that I spent after the full moon hurt my body.

"I don't know. He said he wants to work hard this year," Kaye replied. "Let's just hope the last test is educational."

If Maximus and Norman were on the list, there wasn't much we could do.

"Yeah, let's see what we can do," I said, determined to do everything I could to convince my brothers to make it an educational test.

"So, she'll be known as our stepsister now?" The hesitation in Kaye's voice made me wonder if he was ready to accept her in that role. I couldn't blame him—he'd suffered the most.

"Yeah, why?" I asked, swallowing hard.

"No particular reason," he replied, though his tone was a bit stiff, as if there was something more he wanted to say. But I am sure he would never open up to me. Maybe he will speak his mind to Norman, we all do.

"Once she signs up and gets accepted, her name will be added to our family records through her mother's name," I reminded him.

"Oh! But that'll only be valid as long as Dad keeps her mother around. If he leaves her—" Kaye's words made me sigh. My brothers still held onto the hope that one day Dad would leave Helanie's mother.

Once Helanie is enrolled at the academy using my card, she'll forever be known as our stepsister, at least until Dad decides to kick her mother out but that won't affect her admission. And if he formally accepts her mother in a ceremony and marks her, then Helanie will be recognized as our stepsister not just at the academy but everywhere.

"Anyway, let's just see what happens," I said, wanting to steer the conversation away from her mother. The two were different people, after all. Helanie seemed genuine and also a little lost. I couldn't put my finger on it, but something seemed wrong about her past.

After we hung up, I headed home, walking down the open corridor as fresh wind blew from both sides. At the end of the corridor, I reached the outside room.

"Emmet—" A distant call made me turn to see Ursula watching me from across the corridor.

"Hm? Do you need something?" I looked away, keeping my hands in my pockets. I didn't want to be openly dismissive, but I wasn't fond of her. The only reason I was even responding was because of her daughter. Helanie had earned my respect with her stubborn determination to join the academy.

"I heard there was...an incident in the shelter," she said, keeping her expression neutral, though I could tell she was trying to study my face from a distance.

"Yeah, there was. But it's been taken care of," I replied, noticing fog forming along the corridor as the temperature dropped. The full moon had left me feeling drained.

"I heard it was about a candidate—a rogue one," she continued, rubbing her hands together anxiously. Her energy was so intense that I could sense it despite the corridor and the cold wind between us.

"Yes," I replied curtly, keeping my responses brief. I knew what she wanted to know; I just didn't understand why. She had cast Helanie aside—so why ask about her now?

"A warrior told me...it was a wolfless girl named Helanie—" she shrugged, trying to seem casual, but her presence here contradicted her indifference.

"Aha. Anything else?" I sighed, noticing the slight shock in her expression and the way her hands stilled.

"They...they said the girl is fine now. Is it—" she paused, so I answered her question for her.

"Yes and yes! It's your daughter, and she's participating in the tests now. Anything else?" She finally shook her head, apparently finished asking whatever it was she came here to learn.

I could tell she was anxious, but why not ask about her daughter directly?

I turned and entered my small room outside the mansion, my sanctuary. This corridor and this room held memories of all I had faced and overcome.

As soon as I dropped my coat onto the couch, I grabbed a bottle of wine from the mini fridge and took a long drink. I lay face-down on my bed, and that's when it happened again.

The same cold breeze drifted through, and with it, the bittersweet feeling that happiness was slipping away.

"Look at those stars, Emmet." I could hardly believe my eyes. She stood before me, a faint smile lighting her face.

"I've come from the stars," she murmured, her voice so soothing I could listen to it forever without growing tired.

"But I'm scared," I confessed, watching her perfectly dark brows furrow with concern. The way she looked at me meant everything.

"What scares you, Emmet?" she asked in her gentle, comforting voice. It felt like ages had passed since I last heard it.

"What if you go back to the stars?" I didn't want to imagine her leaving again.

Ever since she'd entered my life, I'd felt whole.

"Then you'll find a way to bring me back, won't you, Emmet?" She stretched her hand toward me, and I grabbed it instantly.

I'd never let her go.

Or so I thought. But then my deepest fear—my fear—came to life.

"Noooo!" I shouted as I watched her body thrown into the well.

"Noooooo!" I screamed and screamed, but it was useless.

This can't be real. This isn't how it happened. It has to be a dream. I need to wake up.

"Please, nooooo!" I cried out, and that's when a hand gripped my shoulder, shaking me until I found comfort in a strong pair of arms.

"Brother! Wake up, it's only a nightmare."

I opened my eyes to see Norman sitting beside me on the cold floor.

"She—" I gasped, struggling for air, "she fell into the well."

My heart was pounding wildly. I could still feel drops of sweat trickling down my temples.

"No one fell into the well, Emmet. It was just a nightmare," Norman's embrace felt grounding and safe.

"How do you always know when I'm in pain?" I didn't even realize when I'd gotten out of bed and started wandering through the hallway. I tended to do this whenever I was too drunk. But right now, I just wanted to know how Norman always managed to be there when his brothers needed him.

"I just know, Emmet." He placed one hand over my heart and the other over his own, a broken smile on his lips.

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

## Chapter 70-It Is Combat Time

### Chapter 70: 70-It Is Combat Time

#### Helanie:

"I don't think I can do this. I am not comfortable here," I murmured, sliding his hand away, feeling awkward about how he was touching me in class. We have kept our relationship a secret. I thought we did but sometimes the way everyone whispered when watching us made me wonder if he had told his friends about us.

"Helanie! Don't be like that. Nobody's going to say anything to us," he insisted, his hand slipping up my skirt again. Every time he touched me, I felt as if everyone's eyes were darting in my direction. Even when no one was looking, I just felt exposed.

"Altan! Not in the classroom," I whispered, slapping his hand away, which made him grunt and angrily pull his chair back.

"What happened? Did Miss Goody Two-Shoes upset you again?" A voice from behind made me roll my eyes. She was always trying to come between us, and he let her.

"Please don't be mad at me. I just don't want anyone starting rumors. If they reach my father's ears—" I tilted my head to look at him and saw the anger in his eyes. He was furious.

"You only care about your own reputation, Helanie. If you loved me, you'd take off that pendant and kiss me right here," he demanded. His demand didn't catch me off guard. He'd asked me to take it off countless times before. But now, here in the classroom?

The teacher would arrive any moment, and if she caught us like this, I was doomed.

"Altan, there are so many guys here. You know what happens when I take my pendant off," I said, glancing around at the others who were already watching us. They all knew Altan wanted to be my first, and he was waiting for me to turn eighteen.

"And you think I won't be able to handle anyone looking at you? I'd poke their eyes out. But only if you trust me. You don't even think I can protect you—you rely on this pendant more than you rely on me," he hissed, grabbing my notebook and tossing it across the room.

I didn't know how else to tell him that he was right. I was afraid he couldn't protect me, but I wouldn't say it out loud and hurt his pride.

As I went to retrieve my notebook, others began throwing it around, kicking it, and sliding it across the classroom. All the while, as I tried to catch it, Altan sat back comfortably and watched. And yet he wanted me to believe he could shield me from anyone's bad intentions.

I woke up suddenly, drenched in sweat, even though I had never slept in such a comfortable bed before. I had only been asleep for a few minutes and was already struck with a nightmare.

"Ugh!" A groan escaped my lips as I sank onto the soft bed. This wasn't just any hotel room—it was a suite. After that nightmare, I decided to shower again to feel better. After a warm bath, I stepped out wrapped in a plush, blue bathrobe.

The room service was incredibly attentive. They brought me delicious food, and now they were giving me a foot massage. I was a little confused as to why they were treating me so well, but then I remembered who had booked the room. Of course, they wouldn't dare disappoint the rogue king's son and his future successor.

"Thank you so much," I murmured to the staff before lying down on the bed. It was set on an elevated platform with windows on three sides and a TV mounted on the fourth wall.

I lay there in silence, watching the rain patter against the window. It was the perfect weather to just be here. If only I felt completely at peace with my life.

The red card in my hand could mean everything—or absolutely nothing—if I didn't use it wisely.

"If only I had the will," I sighed, longing for the part of me that had always existed but never truly surfaced.

With that thought, I drifted off. I woke early the next morning to room service again and began preparing for the day. Kaye had left me a letter with the staff detailing the location and timing of the next test round.

I was a bit nervous, dreading the thought of facing Maximus and Norman again. Those two didn't like me very much.

I spent nearly the entire day watching TV. Back when I lived with my dad, I'd never had a TV. I wasn't even allowed the simplest form of entertainment.

This was my first time holding a remote control, and it felt empowering to be the one in charge.

Living a normal life felt so good. For a moment, I wished I could've been a daddy's princess. I could only imagine how much fun it would have been not to be touched or mocked whenever someone felt like it.

In that life, my dad would have protected me, and everyone would have thought twice before harassing me. No alphas would have dared to take my virginity or leave me for dead when they were finished with me.

No rogue king brothers would mock me, and no wealthy pack candidates would beat me up to hide their nasty little secrets.

A hopeless tear threatened to spill as I pretended to be utterly engrossed in the movies on screen.

The truth was, I wasn't.

Every time a girl appeared on the screen, I wondered about her life. What if she was living the same tragic story behind the scenes?

Or maybe not.

What would it be like to walk in her shoes, though?

I closed my eyes and groaned. "I am not a victim," I whispered into my palms, throwing the remote aside and turning the TV off. Crawling into bed, I reminded myself that tomorrow was my last chance to get into the academy, and I couldn't afford to miss it.

Yet with the card in my hand, I was no longer just a rogue who could be mistreated without consequence. Now, with that card, I was the rogue king's stepsister and stepdaughter—part of their family. But only if I get accepted.

I went to bed carrying the same negative energy, waking up once again feeling like my life was an endless loop. The room service had left a new tracksuit in my room, courtesy of Kaye.

After dressing, I slung my bag over my shoulder, double-checking that I had the card, and headed for the testing grounds.

The same warrior who had escorted me to the hotel was waiting outside for me.

"Ma'am, did you have breakfast?" he asked as he helped me into the back seat.

"I did, thank you!" I replied, sure that Kaye had instructed him to look out for me.

Soon, we arrived at the familiar grounds, a place that now stirred up a feeling of dread. I've been through so much here. But I needed to push past it if I wanted to make it into the academy.

Though it was a different section of the grounds this time, the warrior escorted me directly to where everyone was gathered.

As the group came into view, the warrior stepped aside, and I made my way forward.

Norman and Maximus stood among a circle of the final candidates, both of them wearing sleeveless shirts that showed off their muscular arms, their hair damp from the morning mist.

"Come on!" Norman clapped his hands, introducing two students who seemed ready to face off in combat.

It wasn't until one of them threw a punch and got clawed in the stomach that I realized the final test was all about physical strength—specifically, combat skills.

I instantly wanted to slap my forehead. I scanned the crowd, but Gavin was nowhere to be seen. Had he already taken his test and left? I knew there were two sessions, so maybe he was scheduled for the later one. Should I have come later?

While I was lost in thought, the candidates continued tearing each other apart. Their agonized screams were honestly more terrifying than anything I'd ever heard. The savage intensity of the battle caught me off guard.

I didn't like it.

All the candidates here seemed intense and brutal. Maybe they had failed the written test and were making up for it with sheer physical strength.

"That's it. You—you're out." In a cold, unfeeling voice, Norman pulled the winner off the other candidate, who lay sprawled on the ground, and yelled at the loser.

This was really happening.

"The test here is complete. We've already accepted the candidates—" Maximus stepped into the center, and I realized the ones standing on their left had lost their chance at the academy, while the accepted candidates stood on the right.

But before Maximus could finish, he spotted me in the crowd and frowned. His brother followed his gaze and, upon noticing me, tilted his head back and sighed in clear frustration.

"Oh, it's you again." This time, Norman didn't bother to hide his disdain. Now, all eyes were on me.

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