

# Luna Forsaken

## Chapter 2 The Calm Before the Storm 2

Arya's POV

I lifted my head and just looked at him properly..

James stared at the ceiling, like he had answers. His jaw was locked. His eyes had that flat distant look like he had left part of himself outside.

“James,” I said softly. “What happened today?”

He didn't answer at once.

He ran his fingers through my hair.. Slow.. absent...like he was trying to calm himself as much as me.

Then he turned his head and looked at me.

His gaze was steady, but guarded, like he had already decided what I was allowed to know.

“I found a way,” he said.

My brows lifted. “A way for what?” I asked, my stomach already doing that stupid drop.

“For us,” he replied. “For our pack to join the Union.”

Relief flickered through me so fast it almost felt like joy.

Almost.

Because nothing with the Union was simple. Nothing was free.

“James...”

He cut me off gently, like he didn't want my doubts yet.

“Alpha Marcel Rainhorn has decided to help.”

My skin tightened at the name.

Rainhorns were old power. Union wolves. The kind who smiled while they counted what you owed them.

I searched his face. “Why would he help?”

James’s mouth tightened, he gave me a thin little smile that didn’t reach his eyes “he sees potential in us,”

“ Stop!” I said “ That is not an answer,”

His eyes flickered, just once.

And I knew I wasn’t imagining it.

He was hiding something.

Ria stirred, uneasy now, pressing against my ribs like she wanted to stand between me and whatever he’d brought home.

James kissed my forehead like he could seal my worry shut.

“It’s a good thing,” he murmured. “We’re close, Arya. Closer than we’ve ever been. This is what we’ve worked for.”

“And what does Marcel want in return?” I asked.

The air changed.

James exhaled slowly, then pulled me tighter against him, like he could hold me still and keep the truth out of my hands.

“Let me handle it,” he said.

My stomach dropped, not because he wanted to handle it, but because of the way he said it.

James only said, let me handle it, when whatever he picked up was sharp enough to hurt me too. My heart was no longer at ease.

My fingers curled in the fabric at his chest.

I looked at him and couldn't tell if he actually believed what he was doing, or if teaming up with Alpha Marcel Rainhorn was just desperation dressed up as strategy.

“ And what about our deal with Alpha Maxwell of Dragonclaw pack?” I asked, keeping my voice Steady even though my chest was tight.

“He promised to introduce us to someone close to the Alpha of Blackbirth, the man who heads the union. Why not wait for him? I... I don't trust Marcel's intentions.”

James' mouth tightened. It wasn't just discomfort. There was a flicker of anger in it too, like my doubt had hit a nerve.

“It's been a year, Arya” he said , sharper than he meant to be. He exhaled through his nose, trying to rein it in, “ A whole year, and we still haven't heard anything favourable from Maxwell. What if he is just stringing us along?”

I opened my mouth, but he kept going, The words spilling out like he'd been holding them in for too long.

“ We can't keep floating in limbo while other packs keep attacking us, trying to grab land we fought so hard to win” he said. “ I'm trying to make sure we're recognised faster. I'm trying to make sure we are safe.”

I wanted to push until he snapped and told me the truth about his deal with Marcel.

I wanted the truth even if it hurt.

But he'd come home like a man who'd been afraid he wouldn't get to.

So I swallowed the questions.

For now.

“Okay,” I said quietly.

His shoulders loosened like he'd been bracing for a fight.

He kissed my temple, then my cheek. “Thank you.”

Again.

Gratitude, when it didn't belong here.

Like he was relieved I wasn't making it harder.

Or relieved I didn't understand what was coming.

He fell asleep with his arm around me, breathing finally steady, body finally unclenched.

I stayed awake.

The room was quiet except for his heartbeat. My mind kept circling one ugly truth:

Powerful men didn't help, not really.

They just made sure you owed them..

The next morning, I told myself I was being dramatic.

Maybe it was stress. Maybe it was the weight of leadership pressing on my spine.

Still, my feet carried me to the healer's hut before anyone else was fully awake.

I didn't tell anyone where I was going.

Healer Lesley looked up the second I stepped in, eyes narrowing like she'd been expecting trouble.

"You're early," she said.

"I didn't sleep," I admitted.

Her gaze flicked over me once, too sharp, too knowing. "Sit."

I obeyed.

Lesley didn't waste time with soft words. She took my wrist, pressed two fingers to my pulse, and studied my face like it was a page she'd read before.

"How long?" she asked.

I blinked. "How long what?"

She huffed. "Don't play with me, Arya. Your scent shifted."

Heat rose to my cheeks. "I thought I was just... stressed."

“You are,” she said flatly. “But that’s not all.”

She turned, grabbed what she needed, and moved with quick, practised efficiency, checking, calculating, confirming. The kind of routine that meant she already had an answer in her head and was only making sure her hands agreed.

The wait felt too long. Too loud. My pulse thudded in my ears.

Then Lesley turned back to me, and her expression softened in a way that made my stomach drop.

“Arya,” she said gently, “you’re pregnant.”

The words didn’t slam into me.

They sank.

Quiet. Heavy. Final.

My hand went to my stomach on instinct, palm flat, like I could protect the truth just by touching it.

I couldn’t believe it .

This was a miracle.

After the hit I took to protect James during battle, the healer had made it clear that conception would be difficult.

James and I had decided we’d adopt when the time was right.

Knowing that there was a life growing in me right now was nothing short of a miracle.

“I…” My voice cracked. I swallowed hard. “Are you sure?”

Lesley held my gaze. “Three weeks.”

My chest tightened so sharply I had to breathe slow to keep myself from panicking.

Three weeks.

That meant last month. The night James came back bruised from the border dispute. The night we held each other like the world was trying to peel us apart.

The night I whispered we would outlast everything.

My eyes burned.

Lesley's hand closed over mine, warm and firm. "You need to rest," she said immediately. "You need to eat properly. And you need to stop pushing like you're made of iron."

Fear sliced through me, sudden and sharp. "Don't," I whispered. "Don't say what could happen."

"I'm not trying to scare you," she said, voice softer. "I'm trying to keep you alive. And the baby."

The word baby did something to me.

Hope, dangerous and fragile, rose in my throat like a sob I didn't want to let out.

A child wasn't just a child.

A child was legacy. Proof. Future.

A future no one could erase easily.

Lesley watched my face carefully. "Will you tell t James?"

I shook my head quickly. "No."

"Why not?"

Because James had come home last night with something locked behind his eyes.

Because he said Marcel Rainhorn was helping and refused to say what it cost.

Because if I told him now, he might get distracted and make unwise decisions. I needed him sharp especially now that he was going into a form of partnership with the likes of Marcel Rainhorn k

"I don't want him distracted," I said, voice low. "Not while this Union thing is still... unfolding."

Lesley's brows lifted. "Arya..."

"I'll tell him," I cut in, firmer than I felt. "I will. Just... not yet."

She studied me for a long beat, then sighed like she hated it but understood the kind of world we lived in.

"When?" she asked.

My hand stayed on my stomach.

Our mating anniversary was close. Days away. A day that had always been ours: private, sacred, untouched by politics.

A day I wanted to keep clean.

"I'll tell him on our anniversary," I said softly.

Lesley's mouth tightened, but she nodded once. "Fine. But until then, rest. Eat. And stop trying to carry the entire pack on your back."

A laugh almost escaped me, but it came out like a breath.

"That's not really an option," I murmured.

Lesley leaned in, voice sharp enough to cut. "It is, if you want this child."

The words rooted into my bones. Of course I wanted my child.

I nodded. "I'll be careful."

"Good." She paused, then her gaze narrowed slightly. "And Arya?"

"Yes?"

Whatever she saw in my face, it made her tone careful.

"Whatever is happening with this Union business," she said, "don't let it steal your peace. Not completely."

I forced a small smile that didn't reach my eyes. "I'll try."

Lesley didn't smile back.

I left the hut with my cloak pulled tight and a secret burning under my ribs.

The packhouse stood ahead, our home, our land, our people moving through morning routines like the world wasn't about to change.

And now...

My child.

I should've felt only joy.

But James's voice echoed in my head, quiet and loaded:

'Alpha Marcel Rainhorn has decided to help.'

Fear slid under my skin, cold, precise, not for myself, but for the life quietly forming inside me.

Because if Marcel Rainhorn's help came with a price...

I had a terrible feeling James was already paying it.

And I hadn't even been asked.