

# Letters Sent To Eternity

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 151

A quiet chuckle escapes him, barely audible. “There are just too many moments to pick from. Every time I interact with you, it feels different, interesting in its own way. I have my own perspective, but I also see things through Ryker’s eyes.”

“That’s a pretty vague answer,” she teases, a knowing smile curling on her lips—the same smile my mother wears when she’s plotting something mischievous. “So, what’s been Ryker’s favorite moment with me?”

Before he can respond, Alpha abruptly halts, colliding with Kennedy. The sudden stop is sharp, and I can tell his mood shifts instantly. Kennedy’s fingers tighten in our fur, a silent signal that she senses something too. Our eyes scan the surroundings, alert and focused.

“What’s the situation?” I ask, opening the link to my team, hoping they’ve already been alerted.

“Three rogues crossed into our territory about three minutes ago,” Alpha reports quietly but urgently. “We’ve been tracking them along the border all day. Looks like they were waiting for a signal. They’re heading straight for your location, boss. Your mom is safe for now.”

“I’m two minutes out,” Bennet’s voice comes through the comm. Josh confirms the same.

We inhale sharply, tasting the tension in the air. “Two minutes won’t be enough. Get here fast and secure Kennedy.”

No sooner do I finish speaking than the faint rustling grows louder, carried on the breeze. Two wolves emerge, their approach anything but stealthy. It’s clear they’re on a suicide run—here to deliver information and die trying.

Kennedy clutches our fur tightly, her gaze fixed on the left flank—the direction the wind is coming from. Yet, no one is visible there yet. I wonder if she’s sensing something we haven’t detected.

“Ken, stay close to me. Don’t let go unless absolutely necessary. Bennet and Josh are coming. Don’t engage them—it’ll only put us all at risk. Understand?”

“Mm hmm,” she whispers, her voice barely audible. “They’re here.”

Just then, a dingy gray wolf steps out from the shadows between the trees, followed closely by a brown and white wolf who looks better cared for. They lunge at us immediately. Kennedy’s quick to adapt, moving fluidly with my wolf’s body to shield her. Our presence keeps the rogues at bay, even as they snap fruitlessly over my back, trying to reach her.

One manages to clamp down on my wolf's shoulder, drawing a snarl from me, but we hold our ground. It lunges again, only to be met with a fierce counterattack as Josh crashes into it, biting and clawing with savage intensity.

"Boss, get her out of here! We've got this. Backup is right behind us," Bennet commands, diving into the fray.

Without hesitation, I lower myself, signaling Kennedy to climb on. She protests softly about my injury, but thankfully she doesn't delay. Her hands grip handfuls of our fur tightly, her body pressed flush against my spine. If there weren't danger all around, I might have teased her about holding on so tightly.

The moment we cross into the safety of the packhouse, Kennedy jumps down and immediately presses her small hands to the wound on my shoulder. Seeing her fingers stained with my blood twists something deep inside me. Logically, I know it's just my blood, but the sight is haunting and raw.

"You're hurt," she murmurs weakly. "I'm sorry. We would've been back sooner if we'd driven."

The pain in her voice is unbearable. I shift slightly, still feeling her hands on me. She gasps softly, and I pull her into my arms, holding her close.

"You knew," I say quietly. "How did you know there would be rogues coming through the pack?"

"Huh?"

"You said you had to see him right away. You had some kind of gut feeling. If we hadn't been here, who knows how far those rogues would have gotten, or what they planned to do. How did you know?"

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 152

81 – Ryker

"What made you want to see my wolf?" she asked, her voice soft but curious.

"I don't know," I admitted, feeling a strange pull to have her here. "I just had this sudden urge to check on him. Ryker, you're hurt—does that even matter right now?" She was trying to pull away from me, reaching toward my shoulder to examine the wound. I was nearly healed, the only trace left was the dried blood staining my skin. That was all she seemed to notice.

"I'm fine, really..." I assured her, though I could tell it didn't convince her.

“Oh, Ryker... it was terrifying. I’m so relieved you’re okay. You’re incredibly brave, taking on those rogues all on your own!” Amy exclaimed, throwing herself against my back, pushing Kennedy aside without hesitation. I wasn’t sure if she hadn’t noticed Kennedy or simply didn’t care. But I was standing there naked, and frankly, I wasn’t in the mood to tolerate her nonsense. Only Kennedy had the right to see or touch me like this.

“Amy. Step away. Now,” I growled, my patience thinning.

“But... I just wanted to make sure you’re okay. You never minded before,” she cooed, her tone dripping with false sweetness. “I know how to comfort you.”

I grabbed Kennedy, who looked like she was on the verge of tears, and pulled her close to my chest, resting her cheek against my heart. Using her as a shield, I turned away from Amy. “Kennedy and I are fine. The attack wasn’t as bad as it seemed. Your Luna is very smart, and together we handled the situation quickly.” I glanced down at Kennedy, the fierce protectiveness in her eyes making me press a gentle kiss to her lips. “We’re okay,” I whispered softly against her mouth. Without looking up, I dismissed Amy firmly. I couldn’t afford to leave any doubt about where my attention belonged. “Thank you for your concern. Kennedy and I need to debrief with the team.”

I didn’t spare Amy a backward glance as I turned us around and walked away, doing my best to keep Kennedy between me and her. Knowing Amy was still standing there, staring, made me uneasy. It had never been a problem before—shifters often found themselves naked around one another; it was part of the job. But I understood Kennedy’s feelings about Amy now, and honestly, I was beginning to see why. If some guy kept ignoring the fact that she was taken, kept approaching or touching her despite the clear signs, I’d be furious too. Just thinking about it made my blood boil.

When we finally reached my office, I closed the door behind us. “I’m sorry. I know she can be a lot,” I said, moving across the room toward the bathroom where I kept extra shorts. When I returned, Kennedy was still standing where I’d left her, hugging herself tightly as if trying to hold in her frustration.

“Hey, talk to me. What can I do to wipe that look off your face?” I asked, stepping close enough to gently rub her arms, though I let her decide if she wanted to touch me back.

“She’s the only one who can’t get the damn message to leave you alone,” Kennedy growled, rubbing her face with frustration. I found her jealousy strangely attractive—the tension in her body shifted when it wasn’t directed at me, and it was undeniably hot. “What do I have to do to make her back off? She hasn’t been around in ages. Why show up now? And how the hell did she even find out about the attack? We just got back.” She moved toward the window, still rubbing her face.

“All good questions,” I admitted, “and ones I don’t have answers for yet. But I have to say, I do like this sassy side of yours.” I moved behind her, close enough to feel the warmth radiating from her back, though I still didn’t touch her.

“You don’t like it enough. Not enough to do anything about it,” she teased, arching her back into me. An involuntary whimper escaped me as I gripped her biceps—not to push her

away, but to keep her from escalating things. I couldn't start anything now; she was in danger, and that was the problem I needed to solve first.

Leaning in, I brushed my lips softly against the shell of her ear. "I like it plenty. We'll get there soon enough. I told you, I'm very interested in practicing making pups with you. I just want to take my time, and that's something we never seem to have enough of. I..."

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 153

Danny burst into the room at the worst possible moment. "Boss! We've got all three of the rogues in custody."

I grunted in response, exchanging a glance with her before turning back over my shoulder. "Just as I thought."

"The two who attacked you and Kennedy are badly beaten. Note to self: never cross Bennet when he's fired up about Luna. Greta caught the third one scouting around in the woods. None of them are talking yet, so we might have to get a bit more... persuasive."

I wasn't sure if Danny realized he'd interrupted us and simply didn't care, or if he was so accustomed to my readiness to consider rough methods on prisoners that he just expected it. He stood there, eyes fixed on me, waiting for a reaction.

Kennedy remained facing the window, nestled in my arms, silently listening, her breath steady but tense, waiting to see what I would decide.

"Give me a few minutes," I said, raising an eyebrow at Danny. He returned the gesture with a subtle wiggle of his brows and then backed out of the room deliberately slow, almost as if savoring the moment. Once the door clicked behind him, I pulled Kennedy closer, pressing her firmly against my chest, wrapping my arms around her like a shield. I couldn't bear the thought of being apart from her anymore.

"I need to find out if this is connected to the attack yesterday," I murmured, my voice low and serious. "If it is, you're going to be really mad at me."

"Yesterday? What attack? When did that happen?" She turned slightly toward me, still avoiding eye contact but not pulling away. I took that as a small victory.

"Yesterday, we set a trap for Claude and his crew. They thought you were in the car, so they ambushed it. That's why we left so quickly. Remember, you can mindlink." She gave a single nod. "Between that, the attack on you while you were running, the convoy ambush bringing you here from Silver Crescent, and now this—someone's definitely targeting you. What we don't know yet is why. What their endgame is." I pressed my forehead gently against hers, closing my eyes to steady my breathing. "It's taking everything in me not to lock you down in the house. But you know why we can't. There's a real threat out there, and we don't know who's leading it or how they're getting information. Claude's involved, but

he's not the mastermind, and he's smart enough to keep his hands clean, at least on the surface. Please, stay inside for the rest of the evening. Let us get some answers first."

"Will you tell me everything you find? The whole truth? Even if it's boring or really terrible?" Her voice was soft, vulnerable.

I nodded and kissed her gently on the forehead. I hated every second of this uncertainty, but if she could stay strong, so could I. The thought of her in danger twisted my gut.

"Do you want extra protection here? I know you can handle yourself." I raised my hands in surrender as she opened her mouth to reply. "I don't even let my warriors do patrols alone. Backup is always necessary. Your gamma is going to be glued to you for a while—get used to it. But do you want someone else, too?"

She searched my eyes, and I couldn't tell what she was looking for. After a long moment, she seemed to find what she was after and nodded. "An extra person would be good. Especially if something happens here. One can stay with me while the other handles any attackers. I won't be a liability or a distraction. Bennet's attention shouldn't be split."

A surge of protective fury raced down my spine. No one, nothing should be able to touch her here. The fact that she was already accepting this harsh reality lit a fire inside me, pushing me to act faster.

"Stay in the packhouse, away from the windows. And yes, I know how ridiculous that sounds given the layout. I'll be back as soon as I can, and then we'll finish our conversation."

I kissed her again, unable to get enough of the softness of her lips against mine. My resolve was cracking, and I knew I wouldn't be able to resist much longer. I needed all of her, completely and utterly. But the last thing I wanted was for my selfishness to cause her any more pain.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 154

82 – Kennedy

I can't help but feel a surge of pride in myself. Despite the intense urge bubbling inside to throw a tantrum or storm out of the room, I hold my ground. I refuse to be trapped inside the house again, especially now that Amy has returned, stirring up trouble like she always does. It's clear she doesn't care one bit that Ryker has a mate now. I remember the tension when I first arrived—her hostility was obvious. Back then, I wondered if Ryker shared some deeper bond with her, or if he'd made promises to her long ago, considering his age. Being twenty-six and still unbonded isn't unheard of, but it's definitely unusual. Now, after spending more time around Ryker and observing his behavior, especially the way he held me close when Amy was standing right there, it's obvious the obsession is one-sided—hers, not his.

That realization is hard to digest. The way he held me—so protectively, almost possessively. Even something as simple as using me to shield his bare skin made me feel... something I'm hesitant to name, afraid I might jinx it if I dwell on it too much. After we came to the office, when he saw the upset on my face, he came straight to me, as if I were the only thing that mattered in that moment. I take a deep breath, trying to calm my racing thoughts as I consider how to keep my sanity while I wait.

I decide to start in my new office. The study has quickly become one of my favorite sanctuaries. I've spent countless hours here with Sarah, Greta, Robin, Bennet, and Danny, poring over books and research, trying to find anything that might confirm or refute Ryker's fears about marking me. Danny usually can't stay focused for more than twenty minutes before he starts pacing or wanders off to do something else. So far, we haven't found anything conclusive enough to move forward, but convincing Ryker is an entirely different challenge.

Based on his behavior today, though, I'm confident he'll give in soon. He can't hold out much longer, and he even admitted he likes the sassy, jealous side of me. I caught the way he watched me while I was stretching on the deck—his gaze was intense, almost hungry. Maybe I'll have to push him over the edge by driving him crazy. A sly smile spreads across my face as a plan begins to form in my mind.

With thoughts of seducing Ryker swirling happily in my head, the day passes surprisingly quickly. I share dinner with Robin, who mentions she hasn't heard from the guys since they left to interrogate the rogues. She says it's normal for prisoners to lose track of time, which sounds far from reassuring. After saying goodnight to everyone, I head upstairs to our room, hoping a warm bath might help distract me.

As I walk down the hallway, I notice my old bedroom door is still broken—months have passed since it was damaged. I understand why Ryker never fixed it; he delayed the repairs as long as possible to keep me close. Now, I can't imagine sleeping anywhere else. I smile at the memory, but that smile fades instantly when a sickly sweet scent hits me. My heart pounds with fury. If Ryker is in here with Amy, I swear I'll burn this place down and tear him apart.

Without hesitation, I slam the door open with such force that I probably dent the drywall. All I hear before her loud, fake moan is a faint squeak. The scene in front of me is beyond words—Amy sprawled face down on our bed, legs spread wide, her body deliberately displayed for whoever enters. She clearly intended to entice, but she wasn't expecting me.

"Oh, Alpha, I thought you'd never get here," she purrs, her voice dripping with false sweetness. "It took you so long to get rid of that nasty little human leech. Come help me finish, mmm, hurry!"

"GET THE FUCK OUT OF MY BED, YOU DIRTY WHORE!" I roar, rushing over to grab her by the hair and drag her screaming off the bed.

I pull her out of our bedroom and down the hallway, her shrieks and kicks echoing with every step. I can feel strands of her hair tearing free, but I refuse to loosen my grip—not for a second.

“I warned you,” I growl. “The next time you came near my mate, I’d drag you outside and rip your hair out piece by piece. Now, I get the added bonus of throwing your naked ass out while ripping it all out.” I let her crash down every stair, each ‘oof’ and groan fueling my anger.

By now, I know we’ve made quite the scene. It’s not too late, so people are still moving about on the main floor. Robin rushes out, but stops dead when she sees me. Whether it’s the expression on my face or the woman I’m holding, she doesn’t hesitate—she moves to open the door for me without asking a single question or offering a confused look.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

## Chapter 155

Amy’s shrill screams and frantic scratching at my arms feel relentless. I can’t even make out the words she’s shouting, nor do I care to. The moment I reach the edge of the porch, a surge of adrenaline floods through me, fueling a strength I didn’t know I had. Without hesitation, I grab her and hurl her, still wailing, onto the soft grass below. I leap down after her, trapping her beneath my legs. One hand clamps firmly on the top of her head, tilting it back so she can lock eyes with the fierce determination blazing in mine.

“You are forbidden from the packhouse,” I declare, my voice sharp and unwavering. “You are barred from the training grounds. You will not step foot into any space where the Alpha or I am present.” The force behind my words radiates like an unbreakable shield.

Her face contorts with rage. “You f\*cking c\*nt! Why are you still here?!” she screams, claws raking at me once more. “He never wanted you. He never will. Just f\*cking die already.” I don’t hesitate—I punch her hard, feeling strands of hair tear free beneath my knuckles. I tighten my grip on her scalp, preparing to strike again, when suddenly powerful arms lift me off her. I’m pressed against a broad chest, breath ragged, so focused on Amy that I don’t immediately notice Ryker’s scent enveloping me.

“You’ve made your point, my Luna. Let it go,” he says softly, his voice calm and steady. That gentle tone only fuels my frustration further. I know I’ve made my point—more times than anyone should ever have to. But Amy won’t understand until something truly awful happens to her.

“Put me down, Ryker,” I growl, my voice low and fierce.

“Not until you’re calm, Little Lamb,” he replies, holding me firmly but with care.

I inhale deeply, letting his scent wash over me, slowly dulling the sharp edges of my anger. “Please... put me down,” I whisper, leaning back into his shoulder. Though my voice sounds steadier than I feel, he obliges, setting me on my feet but not releasing me entirely. I lean forward, fixing Amy with a deadly glare that leaves no doubt who my warning is for.

“Stay. Away. From. My. Mate. Next time, no one will stop me.” My words are a growl, fierce and unyielding. Then I turn and stride back toward the house, silently thanking the Goddess

that Ryker lets me go. Had he tried to keep me here to talk or explain, he might have lost some fingers.

Once inside our room, I freeze at the doorway. I can't bring myself to enter. Amy was here. She's tainted this space—the one Ryker said no other female had ever been in before me. And now, by sprawling across the bed I share with him, she's stolen that from me. She must have smelled my scent there and done it anyway. What kind of sick person does something like that?

I move past the bed, heading straight to the patio. I need a moment to truly calm down before I can think clearly and plan my next move. I've kept blankets here for when I read outside. It's not cold, but there's enough chill in the air to want to wrap up warm. I burrow into the cushions and blankets, letting the tears fall. This time, they're tears of anger—anger that she dared to come here without any consequences, anger that no one dealt with her until now, anger that I feel like she got off too easy, and anger that I let her consume so much of my thoughts.

"Kennedy, baby. Where do you want me to take you?" Ryker's voice breaks through the quiet night.

"Mmm?" I murmur, eyes still heavy with sleep.

"You don't want to sleep in our room, and I get why. I'll fix it tomorrow, but I can't stay out here, and I can't sleep without you now. So, where do you want to go, baby?"

I grumble, still half-asleep but simmering with frustration. "You let her go again. You always let her get away with touching you, being close to you... and she... she... she sucks." I turn my head away, curling deeper into the patio chaise.

"This time, I didn't have to do a damn thing. You basically banned her from everything. But we can talk about your Luna aura in the morning, once you're awake enough to explain it." His lips press gently against my temple, and I can't hold back the soft moan that escapes me.

"That's my girl," he murmurs, and then suddenly I'm weightless, drifting off with no memory of what happens next.

When I stir in the early morning light, it's to Ryker's full, undeniable presence pressing against me. I wiggle slightly, testing if he'll move in his sleep—after all, I can always blame anything on that.

A deep growl rumbles from his chest as his fingers dig into my hip. "Sleep, mate. Apparently, you like to talk when you're angry. You just completely crashed a couple of hours ago."

I smile softly to myself, snuggling closer into his warmth. He lets out a little whine but doesn't shift, and I drift back into sleep, comforted by the steady rhythm of his breathing.

## Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

### Chapter 156

I wake up again, draped across Ryker's massively chiseled chest. I take a deep breath in, reveling in his Rosemary mint scent, then roll out of bed trying not to disturb him. I look around to see where we ended up. Surprisingly we are back in my room. He didn't bother fixing the door, it's pushed off to the side. I look around and nothing has been touched aside from the things he had moved into his bedroom. It feels like forever since I have been in here.

I do notice the statue that looks like Alpha has been propped on my bedside table, but there is an addition. There is a lamb statue carved with the same amount of detail standing next to Alpha. The way they are standing though, it's as if they are puzzle pieces that fit together perfectly. I wonder if the same shopkeeper made it. The curve of the wolf's body is just enough for the lamb to curl in, the lamb's front leg crosses over the wolf's in a possessive and protective way. The underside of the wolf's muzzle fits right on top of the lamb's head without hiding the lamb's face whose eyes are the same shade as mine.

I smile walking over to the balcony doors, taking in the haze of sunrise coming over the trees. Last night I remember him mentioning something about me talking a lot when I am angry. I can only imagine what I said. But, if it's anything like drunk Kennedy talking, I told him exactly what I thought about him, Amy, and anyone else my brain could remember while contemplating life and threatening his manhood. I try not to laugh as I head to the bathroom and decide what his torture is going to be this morning. He has to break eventually. I am determined to make him break. I need him to let loose with me.

An hour later I hear the door slide open quietly. I don't know how long he watches me before he can't handle it anymore. I can feel when he's close, like the pressure in the air changes when he's near. But that is the same pressure whether he is sleeping or awake.

"Is that the only move you know how to do Little Lamb?" He groans out.

"It seems to be a favorite of yours, so I may or may not repeat it a few extra times just for you." I look back and smile my best smile in this awkward position. Downward dog makes my ass look good, so it's worth it.

"You have no idea." He mumbles moving behind me. So close, and yet so far.

"You know there is plenty we can do **if** you're still afraid of **s\*x**." I tease, snaking down into a cobra position as slow as my muscles will allow.

He clears his throat. "I'm not afraid of s\*x." I adjust my feet so this time when I push back up, I'm pressed up right against his throbbing c\*ck. I can feel it pulsing, sending a rush of wet heat to my core.

"Prove it." I whisper and he groans.

"I don't know if I will be able to stop once we start." He massages the outside of my thighs. Now we're getting

somewhere.

"I don't want you to stop until I am screaming your name." Back down to cobra, just out of reach.

I push back up, my arms are shaking from being out here and holding these positions for so long, trying to seduce him.

"F\*ck, Kennedy." He groans again, grabbing me.

"Yes, please." he growls and before I know what's happening my leggings are off my ass and around my thighs. Ryker is on his knees behind me palming my bare ass, skiting his thumbs so close to my center where I really need him. "Please." I beg again.

Then it finally happens, a slow light caress of his thumb from my center to my cl\*t and back. "You're soaked, baby. Is this all for me?"

"Yes!" I almost come from just another stroke. I feel like we've been edging each other for months now.

"You smell like a treat. Can I taste you?" Copyright © 2024 Miss L Writes and Ember Mantel Productions

"F\*ck! Yes! Anything, just don't stop." I feel the tip of his tongue brush my bundle, setting the nerves into overdrive. That along with the tingles from everywhere his skin touches mine, I am in heaven. I tilt down to my elbows resting my forehead on my arms. Hopefully my body won't give out and fall over before he's finished with

1.

1. me.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 157

"What do you want, baby? This is all new territory for me. You have to put it into words," Ryker urged softly, his voice low and steady.

"You already know what I like," I gasped, breath hitching as he deepened his touch, licking with more insistence. "Mmm, yes. You talked me through two of the most intense orgasms

I've ever had. Oh, that's exactly it." My mind was a blur, unable to grasp exactly what he was doing, but my legs trembled uncontrollably, waves of pleasure rippling through my body. My breath came in ragged pants, sweat beginning to bead on my skin. Then suddenly, a sharp smack landed on my ass.

"Tell me what you want, right now!" His voice was firm, commanding, as he spanked me again. What he didn't realize was how much I secretly enjoyed it.

"I need more. Please, slide a finger in," I begged, voice trembling with need. He complied, and I could hear the deep growl of approval vibrating in his chest. His hand moved faster, more urgent. "Ryker, please... I can't hold on much longer."

Before I could even process what was happening, he scooped me up effortlessly and laid me down on the bed. My leggings were ripped away, discarded like a forgotten barrier. Ryker knelt between my legs, his broad shoulders parting them wide, and I caught the intense chocolate brown of his eyes, silently asking for permission.

"I need you. Please," I whispered, my voice barely audible. He leaned in slowly, never breaking eye contact, and tasted me once more. There was something in that hungry, raw look that cut deeper than any words could. The moment his thick finger slid inside me, my body erupted. "OH, F\*CK! RYKER, YES!" White stars exploded behind my eyes as my breath caught, my core clenching tightly around him. My body trembled and convulsed as he pumped relentlessly, holding me in the throes of ecstasy until I finally came down from the high.

He crawled upward, lips trailing kisses across the bare skin of my stomach. Between soft, lingering kisses, he murmured, "I really like yoga, and I really like these pants, but most of all, I really like the way you say my name when you come."

I smiled, wrapping my legs around his waist, grinding my still-sensitized clitoris against him. "I want to hear you scream my name," I teased, breathless.

Leaning in, he kissed me again, and I could taste myself on his lips. "Not yet," he murmured, pressing kisses along my jawline while his body moved against mine. "But soon, I think. I can't resist you. That's clear." Despite his protests, he didn't stop exploring every inch of my skin, and I made no move to distract him from his mission.

Later, as we walked into the breakfast room, I couldn't wipe the smile off my face, and Ryker's hands seemed glued to me.

"Well, good morning, you two," Danny greeted with a grin as we took our seats.

"Why did you say it like a question?" I asked, raising an eyebrow.

"Because it was one, Luna. Care to share the secret behind that gorgeous smile this morning?" He wiggled his eyebrows playfully.

"Not if her Delta wants to keep the use of his mouth," Ryker muttered, settling beside me.

“I’m sure your mouth’s tired enough. Maybe she needs a backup,” Danny teased, laughing as Ryker reached around me to swat him.

Their playful banter continued throughout breakfast. I found it all hilarious, but it was clear Ryker wasn’t accustomed to his sex life being the center of conversation. He sat quietly beside me, clutching my thigh under the table like it was his lifeline. The only sign that the teasing was getting to him was the adorable blush he couldn’t hide.

“LUNA! Luna, help! We need you!” Todd burst into the breakfast room, panic written all over his face. I nearly knocked over the table rushing toward him.

“What’s wrong, buddy?” I grabbed his shoulders, noticing his wild eyes and ragged breathing. “Take a deep breath and tell me what happened.”

“It’s Emily, Luna,” he panted, voice trembling. I leaned down to meet his gaze, fully focused.

“What happened?”

“We were playing hide and seek, and now we can’t find her. She’s gotten so good at hiding, and we’ve been searching for an hour. Something feels wrong. We stopped the game, and all the kids are helping look. We need you. If she’s hiding, she’ll come out for you. If she’s not…” He took a shaky breath, tears threatening to spill. “Please, help.”

Without glancing around to see who else was listening, I spun him around in my arms. “Let’s go.”

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 158

“Ken!” I call out urgently, barely managing to get the start of her name before she slips out of the breakfast room, vanishing quickly from sight.

“Luna!” Bennet yells as he rushes after her.

“Hey!” Danny and Greta shout from behind me, their voices echoing as I sprint to keep up.

I’m not sure if she’s deliberately ignoring us or if Todd has captured her full attention, making her oblivious to our calls. But one thing is clear—she’s moving fast, driven by a fierce worry that radiates through the bond we share. I can almost feel the weight of her concern pressing down on me.

“Where was she last seen? Or better yet, where did you lose her scent?” I overhear Luna ask Todd sharply.

Todd’s breathing is ragged, evidence of the sprint he must have made to the packhouse. “We were near the soccer field, close to our house. She wanted to play hide and seek, and we were all having fun, but it’s been too long now. We’ve been calling her nonstop. She doesn’t pull stunts like this—something’s definitely wrong.”

“Kennedy, slow down,” I urge, grabbing her arm and spinning her around gently. Her eyes are wild, filled with frantic energy, and I can tell her thoughts are racing too fast. If she lets her emotions take control, she’ll put herself at risk—and we don’t have any solid leads yet.

Her nostrils flare, and she steps so close that I can hear the rapid thudding of her heartbeat. “There’s a missing child!” she snaps, voice low and fierce. “I’m not going to sit here running through every possible scenario while she’s out there somewhere. If someone needs to analyze, delegate it—have them report back to you over mindlink.” She turns sharply to Todd. “You and the other teens pair up with adults who can shift. Use your tracking skills while they try to pick up her scent.”

“Understood, Luna,” Todd replies, already moving to organize the others.

“Bennet, you’re coming with me,” she commands. “Ryker, will you and Josh scout the perimeter? We’re not far from where Greta found that rogue yesterday. Maybe you can find a vantage point. Emily’s an excellent climber—she might have crossed from tree to tree to hide her scent. Or, worst case…” Luna lowers her voice and leans in closer to me, her tone dropping to a whisper. “Another rogue could be out here, and they might have taken her.” Then she spins back to Todd, dividing the warriors and firing off more questions.

I’m torn between admiration and something more complicated. I’m impressed by how swiftly she’s thinking on her feet, how naturally she steps into command, assigning roles without hesitation. I love how the pack has embraced her leadership—they follow her orders without question. Pride swells in me watching her rise to this role so effortlessly. And, I won’t lie, the way she’s bossing everyone around—even me—is undeniably sexy.

She’s clearly concerned about the missing girl, but she’s not letting her emotions cloud her judgment like I feared. Still, something feels off. My wolf growls uneasily, and I can’t let Luna wander too far, even if Bennet is with her. I also can’t shake a flicker of jealousy that she chose Bennet to go with her instead of me, but I secretly appreciate that she knows I’d want the high ground and control of the search. The fact she took Bennet willingly tells me she’s been paying attention.

My mind is spinning. By the time I’ve rubbed my eyes and made a decision, everyone else is already yards away, scattered in search. No one’s waiting for my final say. It’s obvious—they’re moving on Luna’s timeline, and I’m just along for the ride.

“Greta, take Josh with you. I can’t leave Kennedy alone. We got nothing useful from those rogues.”

“Got it, Boss,” Greta replies without hesitation.

“Kennedy! I’m coming with you, baby,” I call out, dropping my shorts and shifting to catch up.

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“Ryker, Alpha, you and your team should be in the forest. You have the sharpest senses—better than any of us. I’m tracking the human way,” Luna says, pointing towards a small patch of trees to our left.

“No way, Little Lamb,” my wolf growls protectively. “Until we know who’s after you, you’re not out of our sight.”

“Fine,” she concedes, narrowing her eyes. “What can you pick up? Todd said they last saw her just outside the forest there.” She gestures toward the small clearing where all the kids’ belongings lie neatly arranged.

The tension hangs thick in the air as we prepare to dive deeper into the search, every muscle taut with urgency and hope.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

## Chapter 159

Alpha lifted his head, taking a slow, deliberate scan of the area around us. The forest here wasn’t overly thick; in fact, there was just enough open space for children to dart through and play without constantly battling branches or dense underbrush. I could see why this spot had been chosen—it offered a rare balance of cover and freedom. The sound of running water drifted faintly on the breeze, a small river flowing about half a mile away. If the girl had gotten close to it, that would complicate our tracking efforts since the water could wash away any scent trails. And if Kennedy’s hunch was right—that the girl enjoyed climbing—then we were facing an entirely different challenge. I knew of a stretch where the river was shaded by a thick canopy of trees, perfect for someone nimble to cross unseen. It was entirely possible the child had crossed over without realizing it, moving farther away than we had anticipated.

We’d been searching for a couple of hours now, and I wasn’t sure whether to be impressed or irritated by Kennedy’s knack for teaching these kids how to mask their scent. We were moving slowly, but not quietly. The noise of our footsteps and rustling branches made my skin crawl—I hated the thought of crashing through the woods so clumsily when stealth would have been better. But if the girl truly didn’t know we were after her, the sound might actually alert her presence.

“Ryker! Alpha!” Kennedy’s voice cut through the quiet. “I found something.”

I blinked, surprised. How had she found anything? We hadn’t picked up any scent of the girl, nor had we spotted any sign that she’d passed this way. But Kennedy was relentless, clearly more skilled at tracking than she let on.

Alpha moved up beside her, listening intently as she explained what she’d discovered to Todd. Kennedy had been narrating her observations the entire time, a steady stream of commentary that made me appreciate her dedication even more.

“See how this branch is bent like this?” she said, gesturing with her hand. “It shows that someone small moved through here. If it had been higher, we would assume an adult, and

I'd have Bennet or Ryker scout ahead." She glanced back at us, flashing a smile that made my heart skip—a smile I was hopelessly drawn to.

"How can you be sure it was her?" Todd interrupted, breaking our silent focus. I wasn't jealous—just genuinely curious about her reasoning.

Kennedy pointed to a leaf just beyond us. "See that leaf? It's bent in half, stepped on. The way it's leaning means it wasn't an animal—there aren't many creatures in this forest big enough to do that. And right there, at the edge, you can see the imprint of a shoe." She stepped forward, highlighting details as she spoke with a quiet confidence.

What amazed me most was how she could spot what barely amounted to a partial footprint from ten feet away, relying solely on her human senses. I moved closer for a better look, and sure enough, it was a child's footprint. The indentation was faint, easily overlooked by anyone not trained to notice such subtle signs. Bringing my nose down to the ground, I caught the faint scent of the girl, mingled with cedar, pine, and something earthy I couldn't quite place.

"Did you teach them to alter their scents while they travel?" I asked Kennedy, my voice low but clear enough for Bennet and the others to hear.

"That came up a few days ago—one of the older kids asked about it. We talked about testing the theory next time I could get a group of warriors with us. Why?"

"I think she's listening," I said, glancing around. "She might be testing us right now. We're picking up three different scents mixed with hers, but even I can only catch her scent just above the ground."

Kennedy's eyes widened in surprise. Even she seemed taken aback by the cleverness of this little girl. I knew then I'd have to keep an eye on her—this one was going to be my next Greta, but hopefully without the same traumatic start.

"Ryker, we have to find her. She shouldn't be this far out alone, and she's not responding to anyone. Can you try to link with her again? Now that we're closer to where she's been, maybe she'll respond."

She spoke the words as if no other answer was possible, then turned and walked away. I rolled my eyes at her silent command.

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"What's with the fuss? It's not like you'd say no to her," my wolf teased, nudging at my thoughts.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 160

"It's not that," he chuckled, a teasing glint in his eyes. "I just hate how much I actually enjoy it when she's bossy." We hurried after them, trying once again to reach Emily.

I was aware her parents were nearby, better equipped to track her by instinct and proximity. A parent can sense their child's presence like a sixth sense, but this time, they had no clue. Something was blocking her signal, and that unsettled me more than anything. I couldn't tell if she was hurt, but I knew deep down she was still alive. What gnawed at me was how Kennedy would react if we found Emily seriously injured, barely clinging to life. Bennet and I had already been running through worst-case scenarios, planning how to keep Kennedy calm no matter what we uncovered.

"RYKER!" Kennedy's scream cut through the forest as we sprinted toward her. We caught up to her and Todd standing at the edge of a narrow ravine. She pointed down sharply. "Now I know why none of you could track her properly." My wolf instinctively peered over the edge. "There's a patch of wolfsbane down there."

Bennet's wolf gave me a knowing look. "Patch" was definitely an understatement. The area was the size of a football field, thick with the poisonous plant. The ravine was a deep fissure breaking the otherwise flat expanse of the forest floor.

Kennedy was already moving, eyes scanning the ledge. "I think I can get down safely from here. There are plenty of handholds and footholds." But this time, I couldn't just let her rush in. Shifting quickly, I grabbed her, pulling her close against my chest.

"Hold on, mate. You can't just shimmy down there—it's too dangerous." I steadied my voice, trying to keep calm. "Now that we can see her and I can hear her heartbeat, we know she's alive. Let's come up with a plan that gets everyone out without injury or poisoning."

Kennedy turned to me, her voice dropping to a whisper, trembling with fear I hadn't heard before. "Ryker, she's barely breathing." The terror she'd been holding back while searching finally surfaced. "The wolfsbane won't affect me. It makes sense for me to go get her."

"No!" I shot back. "We don't know what else—or who else—is down there. We've been pushing through this forest for a while, giving any rogue or enemy plenty of time to use her as bait."

"Well, I'm not letting you go down there weakened, funny enough, for exactly the same reasons," she said, her tone firm. "So what do we do? If you don't come up with a better plan in the next minute, I'm going after her. She's too small and sensitive to the poison. We need to get to her now—and I need you at full strength if there's anyone else waiting for us."

She pressed her hands against my chest, and I felt a moment of calm settle between us. For a second, I thought she was seeking comfort—but then she pushed me away and strode toward the ledge she'd pointed out earlier. It dawned on me that she was the one calming me down, not the other way around.

"Ken..." I started, but she was already back on her mission.

“I’m going down,” she said decisively. “I’ll need a rope or harness of some kind. I won’t be able to carry her and climb back up at the same time. I’m assuming she’s too weak to hold on by herself.” She turned to Bennet. “Greta, tie something up for me. We need a pack doctor here ASAP to check her for any major injuries. And I’ll need a change of clothes when I get back—I don’t want to spread any poison that might rub off while I carry her.”

“Ken...” I began again, but she spun to face me, eyes blazing with determination.

“Ryker, I’m going down there. You’re staying here. Get your head out of your ass and either help or stay out of the way.” Without waiting for a response, she turned and resumed giving orders.

My wolf growled low in my chest, hungry and insistent. “If you don’t mark her today, I will force you!” The pull in my abdomen was intense, and I knew I wouldn’t put up much of a fight.