

# Letters Sent To Eternity

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Chapter 191

“What’s happening?” I ask urgently as another piercing scream cuts through the tense air.

“Your mate has arrived for you,” he replies, his voice hollow and resigned, as if all hope has drained from him.

“Why aren’t you fighting back?” I press, confusion twisting inside me.

“Why aren’t you running away?” he counters, his eyes searching mine.

“Because I don’t believe you’d ever hurt me,” I say softly. “I don’t think you ever intended to. Honestly, I’m still trying to understand why I’m even here.”

He exhales slowly, the weight of his confession settling between us. “I wanted my mate. I thought you were the key to that. But it turns out I was just a pawn in someone else’s game. None of this was about proving my worth. It was all orchestrated to separate you from your alpha. We did all the hard work for her.” A single tear escapes, trailing down his cheek like a silent admission of defeat.

I feel a pang of empathy for him, recalling the crushing void of rejection and the slow, painful acceptance that follows. “I’m sorry, Finn,” I whisper.

“This isn’t your fault. She’s the one who set this in motion. I’m lost. I’m a warrior, not an alpha. I don’t want that burden. But I can’t stand to see anyone else get hurt.”

I meet his gaze, determination rising within me. “I can help end this, but you have to get me to Ryker—right now.” I extend my wrists toward him.

He inhales deeply, and as he exhales, a single claw flashes through the air. I flinch instinctively, then relax as my hands are freed. He has released me.

“Time to find out if you’re truly as strong as everyone says, Luna,” he says quietly.

Without hesitation, I dart forward, Finn close behind. I can sense Ryker nearby, his presence like a faint pulse. Something about the ropes binding me felt wrong.

“Ryker, I’m here! I’m safe! Please stop! These people don’t deserve this!” I repeat silently, hoping my calm will reach him. I know I can’t mindlink, but maybe my steady thoughts will resonate with their heightened senses.

“KENNEDY! Baby, where are you?” a frantic voice calls out.

“I can feel him that way,” I tell Finn, pointing toward the part of the camp where the noise is loudest.

We weave through the crowd, dodging frantic pack members. The pack isn’t enormous, but at least a hundred people fill the camp, adding to the chaos.

A low, furious growl shakes the ground just as a blur of black fur crashes into Finn.

“Ryker! Alpha! No! Stop! You have to listen—please!” I shout desperately.

In the blink of an eye, Finn has shifted, and the two are locked in a violent tangle—snarling, snapping, biting, clawing. The ferocity is overwhelming, too fast for me to follow clearly.

“LUNA!” warm arms suddenly encircle me, and I wince at the rough contact. “Shit! Luna, are you okay?” Josh spins me around.

“No! Stop them! Please! They have to stop! He didn’t hurt me,” I plead.

“They took you. That’s all that matters,” Josh replies grimly.

“He didn’t kidnap me. He didn’t harm me. He’s the only one who showed any kindness. Now make them stop!” I insist.

“No can do, Luna. He has to pay for his men abducting you,” Josh answers firmly.

I throw my hands up in frustration. “For fuck’s sake, STOP. ALL OF YOU—NOW!” I release my Luna aura. Though I don’t fully understand it, I feel a powerful wave of energy radiate from me.

Suddenly, every sound and movement halts as if the world itself has frozen.

A muffled chuckle breaks the silence. “Yeah, she’ll never be able to do that,” someone sneers.

“Ryker. Let him go, please. I can explain,” I say, my voice surprisingly steady despite the turmoil inside.

Both men have shifted back to human form—I hadn’t noticed when the change occurred. Ryker’s eyes meet mine, locking with an intensity that stops my breath. Without hesitation, he leaps forward and moves directly toward me. Warriors close in on Finn at the edges of my vision, but my focus remains fixed on my mate.

Ryker scoops me into his arms. I cling to him tightly, wrapping around him like a koala, holding on as best I can despite my aching muscles.

“Kennedy,” he breathes, his voice trembling almost like a cry.

“I’m here. I’m not hurt. You have to listen. Can you do that? Because this story... it’s deeper than you realize.”

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101 – Ryker

She's alive. I'm holding her close, finally. The overwhelming panic that had gripped me is slowly ebbing away, but my entire body trembles with the weight of relief. Only now do I begin to understand what pushed my father to the brink of permanent injury when my mother was taken from us. Kennedy isn't even marked yet, but the moment I found her, every other thought vanished. Fear consumed me completely. Nothing mattered except finding her, bringing her back, and making sure every last wolf responsible for her capture paid dearly.

I inhale deeply, savoring the warmth of her honeyed scent. I don't care who's watching. My men stand guard, making sure no one comes near us. She tries to pull away gently, but I refuse to let her go—not yet. I need this closeness. My wolf needs it too, to stay sharp and alert. He prowls around our position, listening for any sudden noises or shifts in the wind.

“Ryker... please,” she whispers, her voice trembling but steady. “I need you to hear me. Can you do that? There are innocent people here. We can't just lash out at everyone. Not all of them deserve your fury. I promise I'll make sure the ones who do are dealt with quickly. Can you listen to me?”

I bury my nose in the soft skin of her neck, feeling the tiny shivers that ripple from my touch. “No,” I manage to murmur, my breath warm against her collarbone.

She chuckles softly, thinking I'm teasing. But I have no intention of listening to the bastard who ordered her capture. “Ryker!” Her voice rises just above a whisper, firmer this time. “Baby, look at me. Please.”

Please.

Following her plea is a mistake. The sight of her battered face fuels my rage a hundredfold. Blood stains her cheeks, and she's clearly been struck several times. Her hair is tangled and matted, and I stop myself from looking any further, afraid I might lose control if I see more wounds.

“Breathe, baby, please,” she urges. “Finn didn't hit me. But one of the rogues and Amy did.”

That last name makes me snap to attention. “Amy? What does she have to do with this?”

“Are you going to listen?”

—

“Do I have to put you down?” I ask, my voice rough but controlled.

“I’d rather you didn’t,” she replies with a small smirk. “It’s actually helping my injuries heal faster. And honestly, I kind of like this position.” Damn, if she weren’t covered in bruises and blood, I’d find a secluded spot and show her exactly what that look means.

“Fine. Talk fast. You need to see the healer.”

“Finn let me go once he realized what Amy’s plan was all along. He’s her given mate.” I glance past my mate cradled in my arms and see the rogue pack’s so-called alpha kneeling nearby, eyes cast downward.

“What the hell does that have to do with you?” Bennet’s voice cuts through from behind me, tense and close. He’s as near as he can get without risking a punch. He wants her comfort too, but not yet.

She gives us a brief rundown of Amy’s scheme, ending with a look that clearly says, \*I told you so.\* My mother and Greta will eventually say those words aloud. I was warned to banish Amy countless times, but no one could prove anything. She arrived with a group of others from a rough background. I thought she was just trying too hard, like many of the she-wolves.

“Finn doesn’t want to be alpha,” she explains. “He was just trying to prove himself to his mate. Once we catch Amy, we have to find proper shelter for these people. I don’t know if there are any kids here, but everyone needs care. Amy clearly hasn’t been providing that. For all her Luna talk, she only cared about winning you as a mate.” Her hands find my cheeks, steady and warm. “What she didn’t realize is that I’m hard to kill, and I’m not giving you up for anything.”

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I lean in slowly, finally ready to press my lips to hers. But the moment our skin brushes, she lets out a small, shaky whimper. Deep inside my chest, Alpha growls low and fierce—an ominous warning. Someone is about to pay for standing between me and my mate.

Kennedy doesn’t falter for a second. Her hands grip my cheeks firmly, but her gaze isn’t on me—it’s sharp, alert. “Finn, where’s Dirk?” she asks calmly, almost too composed for the chaos around us. How does she know all these names? And how can she stay so collected?

“I can call him here, if you want, Luna,” I offer quietly.

Bennet sneers, unable to hide his annoyance. “F\*cking suck up,” he mutters under his breath. Kennedy’s lips twitch into a faint, knowing smile at his jab.

Without warning, Kennedy releases my face, and Alpha whines softly, unsettled by the sudden loss of contact. But then, a wave of calm washes over me, soothing the beast within.

“Thank you, Luna. I’m sorry,” Bennet says, stepping so close I can feel the heat radiating from his body. It’s uncomfortable, but I don’t pull away. Kennedy must have her hand on him, grounding us both. The tense moment shatters abruptly as a wolf is dragged forward, cursing under his breath.

“Ryker, put me down,” she whispers, her voice fierce but low.

“No chance,” I reply just as quietly.

“Let me go, you c\*cksucking motherf\*ckers!” The rogue snarls, struggling against the two warriors holding him by the arms. He spits venom at Finn. “What kind of Alpha are you? Selling out your own pack for what—a pair of tits? Did she suck you off too? Now you’re at the mercy of two b\*tches?”

Kennedy nods toward the man, her voice sharp. “He tied me up and broke my face.” She shudders slightly, then adds quietly, “He’s the reason my blood stains this forest.” I hear her catch her breath as I toss her to Josh without hesitation. There’s no way I’m letting Bennet in on the details of this bastard’s cruelty.

The warriors release the rogue, stepping aside just in time for us to rain down blows on every inch of Dirk’s body. Alpha lends me strength, fueling my strikes—I want him to feel every ounce of pain Kennedy endured while he was in charge. I unleash all the anger and helplessness I’ve carried since learning what happened when she was first captured, and now, seeing her wounded again. I wasn’t there then, but I am here now, and I won’t let him forget it.

When Dirk collapses into a bloody, broken heap, barely clinging to consciousness, Kennedy taps my shoulder. I slide aside as she crouches in front of him, her eyes cold and unforgiving.

“I told you, you’d lose an arm for this,” she says, gently brushing the swollen, bruised cheek that’s turned a dark shade of purple.

Like a well-practiced team, Bennet grabs Dirk’s wrist and holds his arm out, hovering just above the ground. I stomp hard on his elbow, then his shoulder, dislocating both joints. His screams fill the air as I unsheathe Alpha’s claws and sever the limb cleanly.

Somewhere deep in my mind, I notice Kennedy didn’t even flinch at the brutal sight. I make a mental note to ask her about that later. For now, we leave Dirk to bleed out.

“Where’s Amy?” Josh’s voice pulls us back to the pressing issue.

“She ran off when you all broke into the rogue camp. Finn, can you track her through your bond?”

“I’ll try. We’ve got so many precautions in place, though. Our senses are dulled inside the camp—funny enough, that was her and her dad’s idea.”

“While we wait... How many people are with you, Finn? Any kids or anyone needing serious medical care?” Kennedy’s concern is immediate and genuine. Despite everything she’s been through—kidnapped, tortured—her first thought is about helping others.

“We have a few warriors injured, but no children. We’ve been without a home for about a year now. All these people could use a warm bed and a hot meal.”

Kennedy looks at me with pleading eyes. What she doesn’t realize is that right now, I would say yes to anything she asked—no matter what.

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102 – Kennedy

“We can use the arena to gather everyone,” Luna suggested firmly. “No offense, Finn, but we have to keep a close eye on all your followers. We don’t know who might be working with Amy.”

Finn gave a slight nod, his expression unreadable. “No offense taken, Luna. They’ll understand too.”

Bennet stepped forward, weaving his way around Ryker and me. “Can I ask you something?” His tone was sharp, curious. “Why are you addressing her as Luna?”

Finn let out a scoffing laugh, folding his arms across his chest. He remained kneeling on the ground, deliberately keeping himself in a submissive posture to show he was cooperating. “She is a Luna. Didn’t you notice? Since you’re her gamma, I assumed you’d know the basics.”

Bennet growled low in his throat, ready to step forward, but I caught him by the waistband of his shorts. “Bennet, please,” I whispered, trying to calm the tension. “I want to get home, but first we have to figure out where Amy is and what she’s planning. Now that I know all those attacks and crazy things happening lately are her doing, we have to take care of the people she’s hurt. We need to find out who’s truly loyal to her—and maybe to her dad, whoever he is—and bring them both in for trial.”

Bennet’s anger flared visibly, his fists clenched tightly at his sides. His gaze shifted erratically between Finn and me, like he and his wolf couldn’t agree on where to focus. His dark red hair only added to his fierce, intimidating presence.

“What about this bastard?” Bennet’s voice was rough with fury. “He ordered your capture—and probably planned to kill you once he had Ryker. What about him?”

I took a step closer, careful not to lose Ryker’s hand resting protectively around my waist. My bare hands found their way to his upper arms, feeling a comforting warmth radiate between us. It wasn’t the electric spark of mate tingles, but a steady, soothing heat that flowed back and forth.

His dark blue eyes locked onto mine, wary and unyielding. He wouldn't let this go easily; he didn't trust me the way Ryker did. Between them, Josh and Ryker would be the voices of reason—Josh with his calm logic, and Ryker with his unwavering focus on me. “He can stand trial if you think it's necessary,” I said quietly. “But the people who've been following him for a year should be able to speak for him. They were all deceived and used by Amy in some way. He's the only reason Dirk didn't do more than this...” I gestured toward my battered face. Ryker's grip tightened around me. “That has to count for something.”

“It's the only reason he's still alive, Kennedy,” Finn sneered, stepping away from me and my calm resolve.

I released Ryker's arm gently. He needed time to process everything, and I hoped he would be okay. I knew he'd blame himself for letting me get taken right under his nose, especially after I ignored his order to stay home. I had to find a way to make him understand the fault was entirely mine. I insisted on going, fully aware he would follow. I wandered too far from the group and wasn't paying enough attention. I'd grown too comfortable, assuming the warriors around me would always protect me.

After being captured in Silver Crescent, I carried weapons constantly, but here, at the packhouse, I'd become complacent. I hadn't left the packhouse for a long time and didn't even keep a knife on me. If I'd had something sharp, Ryker could have found me faster—I might have been able to cut the ropes holding me.

“Kennedy!” a voice called out from deeper in the camp, breaking the heavy silence and drawing everyone's attention.

Relief flooded me as Greta rushed over, nearly knocking me backward into Ryker's chest.

“Oof!” I stumbled slightly, catching myself.

“Oh! Sorry! Are you okay?” she asked, concern etched across her face as she stepped back to examine me.

I nodded, managing a small smile. “Your mindlink was the craziest—and best timed—thing I've ever heard. They must have been trying to split us into smaller groups...”

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“Wait! Mindlink.” Grasping her arms firmly, I pull her back toward me once more.

“What Mindlink? I can't mindlink with anyone. I only hear Ryker when he decides to let me.” She rolls her eyes over her shoulder in my direction, a hint of exasperation in her voice.

“No, you, dear Luna, lit a fire under the entire pack's collective behind. Even the teens came running to help, and it was Tyler who tracked your very graphic trail. Could you maybe try not to injure yourself so badly and bleed all over just to get our attention next time?” I can't help but tease her.

She smirks. "I'll keep that in mind." Her smile is warm, even though the situation is far from humorous. I appreciate her effort to lift the mood. "Can we get the arena ready for the rogues who need care and shelter? Anyone who resists or causes trouble can be locked in the cells until we figure out who's working with Amy and who isn't. We also need to find out who her father is—he seems to be a major player in this whole long game."

"Consider it done, Luna. Anything else?" She winks at me, a spark of camaraderie in her eyes. "Are all our warriors accounted for and okay?"

"The last I heard, just a few minor injuries. I'll check in and report back to you later tonight."

"Tomorrow morning," Ryker grumbles from behind us.

Both Greta and I turn to him in unison. "What?"

Ryker tightens his hold on me, pressing my back firmly against his chest. He leans close, his breath warm against my ear. "You, Luna, have done enough for one night. You're going home, getting checked out, and then heading straight to bed. Your favorite warrior will check on you in the morning."

"Hey! Cut it out with that 'favorite' nonsense. We all know who she really favors," Greta shoots back with a grin.

"Yeah. Me." Ryker scoops me up effortlessly and begins moving toward the forest.

I lean my cheek against his chest, but immediately wince. He stops right away. "I'm okay, just keep forgetting my face is all messed up." Carefully, he shifts me so I'm resting on the other side, easing the pressure.

"Rest now, Lamb." He pulls me closer, his warmth surrounding me. The gentle rhythm of his steps lulls me; I don't know how long passes before sleep finally claims me.

But—

My eyelids flutter open as the swaying becomes more pronounced. I try to move, but every muscle aches, and grogginess weighs me down. Taking a deep breath, I turn my head slightly and see Ryker still holding me securely. Then there's a sudden bump, and we bounce.

"Easy, Danny. For God's sake." Ryker's voice is sharp but controlled.

"Bennet?" I ask, glancing toward Ryker's right side. My legs are draped across his lap. Danny must be driving. I open my mouth to speak, but Ryker gently stops me.

"Give him some time, Lamb. He's going to beat himself up for losing you, and I know I haven't helped."

I concentrate, digging deep to try and recreate the mindlink—but this time, I focus on just a small part, excluding the whole pack. It feels fuzzy, like an old TV out of focus, but with a slight shift, I manage to sense the connection.

“I don’t want him to get stuck on this, though.” Ryker’s bright smile should distract me from my Gamma’s palpable sadness, but despite everything, I return the smile as best I can, even with my aching cheek.

“Rest, Lamb. We’ve got twenty more minutes, and my mother is losing her mind over how long it’s taking to get you back to her. You’d think she was your mate, not me.”

I let out a soft laugh and snuggle closer, pressing my legs into Bennet’s chest. At least he isn’t pushing me away.

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Chapter 196

103 – Kennedy

“Oh, my girl! How are you holding up?!” Sarah hurriedly approached the SUV as we stepped out. Or rather, as Ryker stepped out—he still refused to let me go. Bennet walked close enough that his arm brushed against my foot with every stride.

“I’m fine, Sarah. Just a few bumps and bruises,” I replied, trying to sound more confident than I felt. Both Ryker and Bennet exhaled simultaneously, clearly worried. I rolled my eyes at their concern. “Really, I’m okay. See?” I motioned to my face, which was already showing signs of improvement. “Being this close to Ryker seems to speed up my healing.”

“Well then, we need to get you a hot meal and a checkup from Doctor Bradshaw, and then straight to bed,” Sarah ordered firmly.

“No, I want to head to my office first,” I insisted. “We need to figure out what Amy is plotting, what Claude is up to, and I don’t want to do that lying in bed. I’m tired of being stuck there because other people are trying to get to you through me.” I glanced at Ryker. “It makes me seem weaker than they think I am. I know I look like a mess, but I’m really okay. My physical condition can’t be more important than the pack’s safety, especially when there are at least two people actively trying to harm us right now.” I tried to free myself from Ryker’s arms, but he whined softly.

“Thanks, Mom,” he muttered as he gently set me down.

“Why your office, girlie?” Sarah asked, ignoring her son’s comment.

“Because I’m not going alone, and my office has enough space for multiple people. Ryker’s office isn’t as accommodating,” I explained, noticing the smile she gave me.

“Can we at least compromise? I can have Cindy bring you some food,” Sarah suggested.

“Sure. The boys need to eat, too. You’ve probably heard, but we’re taking in a whole rogue camp. They’ll need food and likely some basic medical care. I’ll let Cindy handle feeding us, and once they’re settled, Doc Bradshaw can check me out.” I raised an eyebrow, daring her to argue again. To my surprise, she simply nodded and turned away.

I followed her into the house, eager to sit down and review all the attacks now that we knew Amy was either leading or heavily involved in them. With this new insight, we had to understand how they’d been slipping past the pack’s defenses unnoticed.

Sarah headed straight for the kitchen, no doubt to inform Cindy and the other kitchen omegas about the situation. As we made our way toward my office, Robin passed by us.

“I’ll provide you with a full list of the rogues staying with us once they’ve all been accounted for,” Robin said. “There were two pregnant she-wolves I moved to the dorms so their mates could stay close but under watch. The healers are prioritizing them. Anything else you need, Alpha, Luna?”

“No, thank you, Robin,” Ryker’s voice had that familiar tone that let me know he was standing close.

“Robin, once all the rogues are settled, I want you to get some rest. We’ll need you tomorrow,” I commanded.

“But—”

“That’s an order,” I interrupted firmly and continued walking. If I didn’t insist, she’d push herself to exhaustion trying to handle everything.

When I pushed my office door open, I stopped abruptly. “Oh! What’s all this?”

“All what?” Ryker stepped in behind me.

“All these extra books scattered everywhere—that’s what!” I exclaimed.

“Josh and I brought them the other night. Don’t you remember?” He moved forward, followed by Danny, Bennet, and Josh.

“Uh, no,” I said, stepping over a stack of the oldest-looking volumes. “Where did these come from?”

“Your alpha took them from Claude after he insulted you,” Josh said with a laugh. “Actually, the one you’re holding—he snatched it right out of Claude’s hands.”

I smirked as I flipped through the pages. “Why would you take his books? Insulting me doesn’t seem like a good enough reason.”

“Well, it is,” Josh said with a grin. “He and his jerk Rick were searching for something. The office looked like a tornado hit it. They were in a rush, acting like assholes, so we decided to make their job a little harder.”

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“Yeah, your mate knows you love to read, so he thought you might enjoy some dusty old history from Claude’s former pack,” Josh said with a teasing grin.

Before I could respond, Ryker gave Josh a playful smack on the head as everyone settled into the room, trying to find a comfortable spot. Then, without hesitation, Ryker pulled me into his lap on my desk chair, holding me close. “I’m well aware that he’s been scheming to reclaim his pack from me without resorting to a fight. He’s fully aware he’d lose again, and most of his pack wouldn’t follow him if given the choice. You should have seen the look on his face when Josh and I barged in like that.”

Josh nodded. “Yeah, he’s always been sketchy, but this time he seemed especially rushed, like he was under some kind of pressure. Though honestly, it might not have involved you or us directly. I can’t think of any other reason for his urgency. All I know is he’s obsessed with getting his Alpha title back and being a huge pain in our asses.”

Bennet cut in, breaking the conversation between Ryker and Josh. “Luna, what are you thinking? We need to keep focused, and you need to see the healer. That cheek injury isn’t going to fix itself, no matter how close you sit to the boss. That bastard broke your cheekbone.” He gripped the armrests of his chair tightly, his claws extending slightly, a clear sign of his anger.

“Bennet! Enough. We are not going to have this argument tonight,” I said firmly, pointing to the swollen side of my face. “This wasn’t your doing. Dirk didn’t have to hit me at all. He was just trying to overcompensate for his own insecurities. Honestly, I’d pushed it out of my mind until just now.” I winced as my jaw twitched involuntarily, feeling a surge of frustration at the assumption that I was hurt because of him.

Bennet’s voice was incredulous. “How do you just forget something like that?”

“Honestly, it’s probably adrenaline and Ryker keeping me grounded,” I admitted. “But right now, it’s just sore. Nothing more.” He grumbled but dropped the subject. “Did anyone find Amy yet? She’s the real problem here.”

“I don’t think so,” Josh answered. “But now that everyone knows she’s involved, it shouldn’t take long. She slipped away before you let the pack know about her role. Plus, we’ve got all the rogues coming to the arena, like you requested, so she’s got nowhere left to run. So far, none of them are resisting the move. I think they were following Amy simply because they didn’t have a better option.” Danny’s rare serious expression settled on his face. “Now that they’ve seen a real Luna in action, we should have that bitch cornered soon.” There was my loyal delta.

A knock at the door interrupted us, and Cindy stepped inside. “Hi, Luna. Miss Sarah asked me to bring this to you and to let you know the rogues have been taken care of before you start arguing.” Ryker chuckled beneath me. “Oh, and Doc Bradshaw is on her way as well.”

I laughed softly. "I'd love to see the person who can get my mom to follow directions." Ryker was still chuckling quietly.

"What are you talking about? I told her I'd eat and see the doc after the rogues were handled. I'm no martyr. I know we need to stay healthy to look after the pack, but they've been suffering longer than me. Besides, I've got you for pain relief." I tapped Ryker's cheek affectionately. "Now that they're here and fed, we need to figure out if they're loyal to Amy or if they're looking for a new home. How do we go about that?"

We stayed up late into the night—well, early morning, depending on how you looked at it—as the guys patiently explained what happens when a wolf faces trial. I hadn't realized there were different kinds of trials, but it made sense given how many new members the pack had absorbed over the years. They needed a system to sift out those who wouldn't truly integrate into the Dark Moon pack once it took control. The weight of responsibility settled over me, but with Ryker's steady presence and the pack's support, I felt ready to face whatever came next.

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Chapter 198

104 – Kennedy

"Alright, that's enough for now. We need to call it a night and get some rest. No training tomorrow—everyone needs a break," Josh declared, glancing over at me as I flipped through yet another old book. "That way, our omegas can recover and also take care of our guests. Sound good to you, Luna?"

I found myself only half-listening after I grasped the basics of how the trials would be conducted for each person brought in last night. Ryker had the ability to determine the rank of every individual, and their questioning was tailored accordingly. It wasn't about dividing people unfairly—it was practical. Omegas would have different responses than warriors or higher-ranking members. He could even spot when someone of higher rank was trying to blend in with the crowd. Apparently, some smaller packs had attempted Trojan horse tactics to overthrow leadership, but the same strategy had also been used to protect children of fallen alphas who might be vulnerable to attack.

I knew Ryker and Josh had handed me these books as a joke, snatching them straight from Claude's grasp, but I couldn't help feeling curious about what could possibly be so important to a guy like Claude. Was he truly as obsessed with legacy and bloodlines as he claimed, or was there something deeper at play?

So far, the books had mostly covered general topics—plants, herbs, healing methods, and ways to cause harm. I'd actually found several pages that would interest Doc Bradshaw and Greta. The book I was currently reading delved into bloodlines across generations. It was dull when you didn't recognize the names, but then I spotted one familiar name. And a line that shouldn't make sense caught my eye, giving me yet another reason to despise the former leader of the Demon Paw Pack.

“No way!” I exclaimed.

Josh groaned, “What do you mean, ‘no way’? We need to get some sleep, Luna.”

I looked up from the book, pulling my legs out of Ryker’s lap. We’d claimed one of the couches, and he’d let me sit mostly on my own as long as we stayed in contact.

“I asked if we could just pause this until morning. Are you okay?” Josh pressed gently.

Not looking up right away, I kept scanning the page to make sure I wasn’t imagining things. “Uh, yeah. But I think I found something important.” I leaned forward and carefully placed the ancient tome on the coffee table. “Look at this family tree. Tell me what you see.”

They all bent over the book, studying the lines for a few moments. “I see Claude’s name here, but who’s that before him?” Josh asked. Ryker turned the book toward him.

“It looks like Claude was actually the second-born son. That explains a lot. He wasn’t supposed to be Alpha. Seems he was mated to the Demon Paw Pack’s only daughter. That’s how he claimed the title. His mate was the heir, and he just took over.”

“Did you notice which pack he came from?” I asked, feeling like they were missing the bigger picture.

“How the hell did we not know this?” Ryker’s eyes met each of ours, disbelief evident.

“Did you need to? He was in power before you took over. Your dad tolerated him, and I’m sure you don’t know the lineage of every pack you’ve absorbed since becoming Alpha.”

“Maybe I do need to know now,” Ryker said, turning his gaze to me.

“Maybe,” I replied, “but keep reading. It gets worse—or better—depending on how you look at it.”

They leaned in closer, scrutinizing the text with greater intensity. I couldn’t wait for them to piece it all together. I’d been staring at this page for over an hour. The names and titles were numerous, printed in tiny, swirling calligraphy—someone clearly wanted to keep records while making them hard to read quickly.

“Here,” I pointed to a spot near Claude’s name, though arranged so you wouldn’t immediately connect the two. “This was his mate. And see this little mark? It means she was chosen, not fated.”

“How do you figure that?” Bennet asked, intrigued.

They all shifted their seats closer, the atmosphere charged with curiosity—much like when I taught the pups.

“First, there are very few of these marks,” I pointed to a tiny red plus sign beside the mate’s name. “And second, only fated mates have their family lines listed on another page.” I

flipped the book to show a corresponding record. “So, taking a chosen mate was frowned upon, but it happened often enough that they kept track of where those bloodlines went—especially with first-born sons’ chosen mates. Also, second-born sons who moved to other packs, like Claude. But that’s not the most important part. Look here.” I indicated a name just beneath Claude’s mate, and another under the name of Claude’s brother’s mate. “That can’t be a coincidence.”

“Are you sure?” Ryker asked skeptically.

“It’s the only thing that makes sense. When did they arrive? I never thought to ask because it was before my time.” I looked around at each of them.

Josh glanced at Ryker, Bennet cleared his throat, and then Danny spoke up first. “They came to the pack about three years ago, give or take.”

“Amy and Janelle are pretty close. If they’re cousins, that would explain a lot. What I don’t get is how no one knew Amy was Claude’s daughter. Or, I guess, ‘an’ Amy is Claude’s daughter. Did you even know he had a daughter? When you took over his pack, where were his mate and kid?” I turned to Ryker.

“When I fought him, his mate had already died and he didn’t have a child. No one said otherwise, so we didn’t question it. So the people closest to him lied—and have kept lying. I wonder if his pack even knew about her.”

“So Janelle is her cousin, and a daughter of the Moon River Pack? Is that what we’re thinking?” Bennet asked.

“If this all pans out the way you’re suggesting, they showed up after the attack on Kennedy and your caravan. So what? That plan failed, and they pretended to be lost rogues looking for a home just to get close to you?” Josh spat, glaring at Ryker. “Isn’t that a bit drawn out?”

“Not if she’s Claude’s daughter,” Bennet said, laughing bitterly as he stood and began pacing. “He’s been playing the long game for ten years, trying to wrest control from Ryker. He did to his mate what he’s trying to do now—he mated her, took the pack, and now he’s using his daughter to force a chosen mate bond to seize power again.”

“We need to find them both and end this—once and for all,” Ryker said fiercely, storming out of the room. We all scrambled to follow, me running to keep up with the others.

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Chapter 199

105 – Ryker

How on earth did I miss this? There’s no way we overlooked something this big.

“Actually, it could be possible if Kennedy’s right and Amy is alpha-born,” Alpha said, trying to keep me grounded. “Someone must have shown her how to suppress her aura. But if she

can do that, it doesn't change much for me." I needed to stay calm, to keep my head clear despite the storm brewing inside me.

"So, you're saying I should kill them both on sight? No hesitation, no questions?" I pressed, wanting his honest take. I've never doubted a kill before, but this time it felt different—too personal because of Kennedy. I couldn't just kill on a whim simply because I was angry.

"If Amy is truly involved like it seems, she's already tried to kill your mate multiple times and would keep trying if given the chance," Alpha answered firmly. "So yes, I'd kill Amy immediately. Janelle, though? I don't think she's as deep into this—she's just always been around Amy."

"I need to check on Danny. Janelle is one of his favorites," I muttered, the thought gnawing at me.

"RYKER, STOP!" Kennedy's voice stopped me as I headed toward the truck.

"Lamb, you can't come this time. I'm sorry. I don't want you to see what's coming," I said, my voice low but resolute.

"No way I'm staying behind! Ryker, we need answers. Amy might be involved in my parents' death. She had me kidnapped. She wants to be Luna and has never hidden that ambition. But if Claude is controlling her, what's his endgame? There's no way he's helping her rise above him. I need this as much as you do," Kennedy insisted, her eyes fierce with determination.

"Alright, everyone. Grab Finn. We need Amy. He has to force the mate bond to bring her to us. If that fails, I'll command her. By now, she has to realize we hold her mate and the warriors she's built," I ordered, urgency sharpening my tone.

I pulled Kennedy close, feeling the exhaustion in her frame. We were all drained, but her human body wasn't made for this kind of relentless stress.

As if reading my thoughts, she clung tightly, wrapping her arms around my waist and resting her ear against my chest. "I want to stay with you. Being near you is what keeps me steady. Please don't leave me here to worry alone. Something bad always happens when you do."

I leaned back, inhaling deeply. She wasn't wrong—and she certainly knew how to get her way. "Fine. But you have to promise me you'll listen."

"I promise," she said instantly, too quickly.

"No. If I tell you to go to the truck and lock the door, that's exactly what you'll do. If I say drive back to the packhouse and stay with Mom, you do it. We don't know Claude's plan. I think you're right about him. But what I do know is this: you're the real threat to him. I've accepted you as my mate and Luna. He knows I won't let Amy have you. If that's part of his game, it's failing. You're in danger, but Alpha and I don't want you anywhere we can't see you either."

I lifted her effortlessly. She wrapped her long, soft legs around my waist, and for a brief moment, I almost forgot the mission when she pressed a gentle kiss to my lips. It was fleeting but enough to make her smile—and lighten the weight both Alpha and I carried. I set her carefully in the passenger seat, then jumped behind the wheel.

“Why bring the truck if you weren’t planning to take me with you?” she asked as I started the engine.

“If we end up killing any of them tonight, we’ll have to remove the bodies. No one peaceful deserves to spend the night with a corpse,” I explained. She simply nodded, understanding.

“How are you so calm about all this? Most people—even omegas—hate talking about war and death. Not to mention what we did earlier to Dirk,” I said, curiosity lacing my tone.

She shrugged but avoided my gaze, staring out the window instead. “Maybe because I’ve been around wolves my whole life.”

“But that—”

“Not just any wolves. Alpha wolves. Remember, Jeremiah and I were practically treated like twins back then. Uncle James never sugarcoated the darker side of being an alpha. He said so many crave power but don’t grasp the responsibility it carries. When you fight, it’s not just the fighters who suffer. He made sure we all understood that. Especially when it comes to taking a life. He taught us to never take that decision lightly—but also not to hesitate when someone won’t show you the same respect.”

Her words hung in the air as the truck rolled forward, the night thick with tension and unspoken fears.

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Chapter 200

She pressed her hands against her face, then slowly lifted her piercing ice-blue eyes to meet mine. I had to remind myself repeatedly that I was behind the wheel and needed to focus on the road ahead—we couldn’t afford to veer off, no matter how captivating she was in that moment.

“Dirk deserved what happened tonight,” she said quietly, her voice trembling slightly but filled with conviction. “The way he hit me... it wasn’t the first time. He’s done it before, and if I hadn’t stopped him, he would’ve done it again. The way he spoke to me, and about me—it was disgusting. He’s forced himself on other women too. Someone like that doesn’t deserve to keep breathing.” Her hands tightened on her lap as she spoke, a flicker of pain crossing her face. “I don’t know if that makes me a bad person, but I’ve been through terrible things. If by letting you take him down I can save even one girl from going through what I did...” She shrugged, a mixture of resignation and hope in her eyes.

Without hesitation, I reached out and took her hand gently in mine. “That doesn’t make you a bad person. It makes you a strong leader. No one wants to make decisions like this, but someone with a clear head has to step up. I’m grateful you’re here with me.”

I brushed a soft kiss on the back of her hand just as we pulled up to the arena. The place was bathed in artificial light, glowing brightly against the early morning sky where the first hints of sunrise were beginning to pierce the darkness.

“So, what’s the plan now?” Kennedy asked as she climbed out of the truck, still holding my hand tightly. Her voice was steady, but I could sense the weight of everything pressing down on her.

“I want to start with Finn,” I replied, guiding her through the gate. “He seems like he genuinely cares about the people who follow him. He wants what’s best for them, but he also wants his mate. The problem is, he knows she’s going to die once we bring her here. We need her to lure Claude out—if he really is her father—but I can’t pretend to care about her. I just can’t. Honestly, I’m not sure what the right move is.”

Kennedy nodded thoughtfully. “We have to offer Finn and anyone else who wants it a place in the pack. We don’t know their stories or how they ended up here, but they shouldn’t be punished for what Claude and Amy are doing.”

I considered her words carefully. “What do you suggest? I’m open to ideas.” Together, we passed through the gate, which was guarded by two vigilant warriors.

The opposite gate was similarly manned, with more warriors patrolling the stands surrounding the arena. We allowed the rogues to set up their tents nearby. Greta and Grant had taken charge of searching for anything that could be used against us—poisons, weapons, anything that might tip the balance. Kennedy’s point was valid: these people were probably just caught in the wrong place at the wrong time. Wolves need a hierarchy, a leader to follow, and they naturally gravitate toward the strongest among them.

Suddenly, a large wolf charged toward us, his voice raw with fury. “YOU MOTHERF\*CKER! Where is my mate?!” I quickly shoved Kennedy behind me with one hand, while blocking the incoming punch with the other.

The wolf was powerful, but his wild, uncontrolled anger made him reckless. I didn’t want to hurt him, but I needed to calm him down. Punch, dodge, punch—each strike pushed him back slightly, though his eyes were clouded with rage and desperation. Finally, I managed to grab his wrist and sweep his legs out from under him, spinning him around so he knelt before me, caught in a headlock with one arm pinned behind his back.

“Calm down,” I said firmly. “Take a deep breath, then speak to me with respect, warrior.” It took several minutes for him to steady his breathing. He didn’t resist, but he also didn’t go limp in my hold.

“Where is my mate?” he growled through clenched teeth. At least he realized quickly that if he wanted answers, he needed to keep control.

Kennedy stepped around me and faced him, her hands raised in a peaceful gesture. I hated that he was between us, but she seemed unafraid. “Who is your mate?” she asked softly.

“Sammie,” he said, the pain evident in his voice.

“And what’s your name?” Kennedy moved closer, and I felt my hackles rise instinctively. She caught the warning in my posture and shot me a sharp look.

“Calvin, Luna,” he replied.

I couldn’t help but joke quietly to my wolf, “So she gets a title, and I get called a ‘motherf\*cker.’ How does she do that?”

“If the roles were reversed, would you act any differently?” my wolf responded, calm but firm. “You have him in a chokehold for a good reason—he could have harmed our mate. But she’s talking to him calmly, listening.”

I turned back to Calvin. “Is your mate expecting?”

He nodded against my arm.

“There were two pregnant mates brought here. We gave them space in the dorms so our healers could monitor them closely and make sure they were comfortable. Both were malnourished, and we want to ensure the health of your mates and pups. I’m sure you understand why we can’t have everyone roaming freely right now. We’ll take you to her as soon as possible.” Calvin nodded again.

“You can mindlink with her, though,” I added, offering a small measure of comfort.