

# Letters Sent To Eternity

## Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 351

26 – Elara

He left. Just like that—he simply walked away. Did I secretly hope to find him beside me when I woke up? No, I told myself firmly.

“Yes,” my inner wolf whispered sharply, calling out my lie, but I refused to admit it aloud.

I’m not sure I’ve ever allowed myself to be this exposed with anyone before. I surrendered completely, letting him take the reins and use me as he pleased, and somehow, it felt like it was all for my own good. He didn’t gain anything from it. Maybe that’s why he vanished. He never sought anything in return; he just knew how to manipulate the bond between us to force me to rest—and rest I did. I slipped into unconsciousness for the remainder of the day and the entire night that followed. The only thing that stirred me awake was the steady pounding coming from my best friends’ apartment next door, the shared wall amplifying their rhythm as the sun crept over the treetops. Checking my phone, I saw the time and couldn’t help but let the sounds stir my own memories. I allowed myself to drift into the recollection of Ben and his wolf claiming me with such fierce passion.

Once the noise died down and we all seemed content and quiet, I hesitated but eventually climbed out of bed. I made my way to the shower, only to be ambushed by memories there too—Ben catching me bent over as I washed, the fire in his eyes as he gripped me tightly. I definitely needed a cold shower if I was ever going to leave my room again.

“Sleep well?” Jax’s smirk greeted me as I entered the dining room.

“Did you have a good morning fuck?” I shot back with equal sass. His glance toward Dev was charged with heat so intense that I knew if we kept this up, they’d both need a half-hour break to recover.

“Thanks to you and your boytoy, yes, we did,” Dev said with a smile. “He’s been the best yet. I could practically feel your pleasure wafting through the air—it was incredible.” I buried my face in my hands, feeling a flush rise.

We’ve never been shy about sex, always sharing our experiences openly, which has only enhanced our own. But for some reason, I didn’t want to share anything about Ben or the new, fragile intimacy blossoming between us.

“Don’t go hiding on us now. Was it really as amazing as it sounded? I bet he’s hung like a beast. You were making so much noise—he has to be huge!” Dev teased.

“I don’t actually know, Dev. He only used his mouth and fingers,” I replied, feeling a little shy.

Jax dropped his fork in disbelief. “You sounded like that and didn’t even get the full ride?!”

A small smile tugged at my lips. I could understand his surprise. I’d never been satisfied with oral alone, and no one had ever knocked me unconscious with just two orgasms—Ben did both spectacularly. A pang of envy for his girlfriend—wherever she was—twisted in my gut. Suddenly, my mouth went dry. Jax must have caught the shift in my mood because he quickly changed the subject.

“So, we have a better handle on the trails now. Patrols found a new one earlier this morning—well, last night, actually. About five hours ago, they discovered a trail that leads into the western forest near the mountains.”

“How did you find a new trail now? We’ve been searching for months...” I asked, puzzled.

“Uh, Ben walked us through it while you were... uh... well, after he, uh...” Jax stammered.

“After your boytoy rocked your world and knocked you out, he filled us in on some new findings,” Dev cut in, interrupting Jax’s faltering explanation.

“He told you? And don’t call him that—it’s weird and wrong on so many levels.”

“Oh, I’m going to call him whatever I want behind his back. To his face, it’s ‘sir.’ My wolf won’t let me call him anything else.”

“What? No, I don’t want to know. We’re getting off track. What did he tell you?”

They updated me on the details Ben had shared about witch involvement. All our patrols took the information seriously and acted on it immediately. The most active trail starts from the forest on our western border, crosses the waterfront, and heads toward the cave. Junior’s team checked in and found trails leading into neutral territory. Ben also alerted Blue Moon and White Diamond, but so far, they’ve found nothing. Despite the trails, no one has been caught moving through our lands.

“We need to catch someone—anyone—at this point,” I muttered, pacing around my desk. We’d updated the map in my office to include the new trails, but now I needed timings to strategically monitor anyone passing through our territory.

A sudden knock on the door pulled me from my thoughts. An omega opened it, her face pale with fear.

“Get out of my way!” a booming voice barked as one of our shopkeepers stormed past her. I straightened up, ready for whatever confrontation was brewing. I wasn’t about to let some arrogant jerk come in here and treat anyone under my roof like dirt.

“Marcia, are you okay?” I asked gently, noticing how she clung to the doorframe, clearly wishing she could be anywhere else.

“I’m talking to you, girl. Your help can leave,” the man growled, making Marcia squeak and scurry away quickly. My temper flared instantly.

My wolf surged to the surface, reflected sharply in my eyes as I stepped forward to face the full-grown man. “You are in the presence of your Alpha. You will show respect in this house—to everyone here. Is that clear?”

“You’re not my Alpha. Your father should remember what he was told last year. All our businesses are tanking under your so-called leadership. Your people are suffering. Kids are scared to go outside, parents worry they’ll be next to be poisoned and left to rot in the hospital while you hide away here with your little friends playing at being in charge. Fix the problem, or you’ll be challenged—and you won’t win.”

With that, he stormed out, leaving me stunned. I glanced around the room, dumbfounded. “What the hell was that?”

My best friends looked at me like they’d just tasted something sour. “You should talk to Ben,” Dev suggested quietly.

“What can he possibly tell me that you two chickenshits can’t?!” I snapped.

“It’s not that we can’t tell you. You’re just calmer when he delivers bad news,” Jax explained. I exhaled sharply and fixed my gaze on him. I’d wait them out since apparently, I wasn’t being reasonable.

“Yeah, so there’ve been some rumors floating around... and they’re just that—rumors. Nothing we’ve heard is close to the truth, but someone’s definitely trying to see you fail,” Dev began gently.

“Why the fuck...” I started, but a familiar voice interrupted.

“Hey, El.” I looked around, searching for the source of the disembodied voice.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 352

27 – Elara

“Ben?!” I asked, still half-expecting him to be right there beside me.

“Yeah...” came his quiet reply.

“What?” I glanced over at Jax, who didn’t look the least bit embarrassed, clutching his phone with a raised eyebrow that seemed to challenge me. I just shot him a sharp glare.

“El, do me a favor, will you?”

I sighed heavily. “What is it, Ben?”

“Go for a walk. Take some deep breaths. Might help you clear your head and see things more clearly.” I immediately looked toward my team. That was Ben’s subtle way of signaling that someone might be listening in. Tilting my head toward them, I grabbed the phone and kept up the charade until we were sure. We each took a corner of the room to search. I’d already cleared out as much clutter as possible from my dad’s office, trying to minimize hiding spots for any bugs or devices, but somehow, someone was still managing to get in. Now that we’d started narrowing down suspects, I had a few ideas. We just needed to catch whoever it was red-handed; without solid proof, nothing would change. That had been my dad’s biggest frustration all along.

Ben rambled on about where else we should search for clues, what patrol schedule adjustments I needed to make, and even his upcoming trip to Dark Moon. Apparently, his endless chatter was announcing his absence to our enemies without him realizing it.

Jax waved a hand and pointed toward a spot. So, someone wanted a recording of one of the pack members giving me a hard time—or maybe they just wanted to make sure it happened. Either way, it was plausible. Dev signaled with two fingers. I was beyond tired of these code words and sneaking around inside my own house. But if I locked down the packhouse completely, I’d become exactly what the rumors said I was. This whole thing felt like a long, exhausting game.

“Hey, Alpha. We’ll let you catch up. We’ll meet you for patrols,” Jax said. Both he and Dev slowly dismantled the devices, pocketed the parts, and left. Whoever was planting these clearly knew I’d find and destroy them. Why else would they think I spoke freely anywhere? Maybe that was the point—to keep me quiet.

Finding nothing on my side of the room, I returned to my desk.

“All clear, I think,” I whispered, taking Ben off speakerphone. “Do you think they’re trying to make me paranoid enough to stop talking, or are they just gathering intel to stay one step ahead?”

A wave of exhaustion washed over me again.

“Honestly? Probably both. It’s happening right under your nose, in your own home. It’s designed to make you doubt everyone around you, to isolate you. And in some ways, it’s working. You only trust a handful of people now, and it’s preventing you from doing your job properly anywhere in the packhouse.”

“What about the rumors? I’m sure Dev and Jax told you more details since you seem calmer than I am.”

“They did,” Ben said quietly.

“And...?”

“And what? You want me to repeat them? Because I’m not going to,” he replied sternly. “You’re not the first Alpha to face threats or have people angry at you. There’s always someone upset about something. Every Alpha has to deal with it.”

“But I’m a female…” I trailed off.

“So what? You’re not the first female Alpha in our history. Maybe it’s less common because the bloodthirsty, overprotective, alpha-male instincts tend to be male wolf traits, but you’re far from unique. Females can and do make successful Alphas.” I let out a bitter laugh. He made it sound so simple.

“You didn’t hear the uproar when I was fourteen and my dad told his team he’d be training me to succeed him, without waiting for my mate to join us. Several council members and Elders loudly voiced their distaste for a female Alpha.”

“Forget ‘em,” Ben said with a shrug. “They probably have cushy jobs with cushy paychecks they don’t deserve. Every powerful woman I’ve known has made her top people work hard. They’re probably just afraid of what change means.”

“How do you know so much about the ugly side of being an Alpha?”

“Alpha James never hid that side from us. He believed we should all be prepared, so we could handle what we can control and support pack members through what we can’t, working alongside Jer. The more I think about it, this all probably ties together.”

“How much time have you had?” I asked, wanting to shift the topic. I was dangerously close to revealing something personal.

“Too damn much. We stopped to swap patrols, but Dark Moon is six hours from my packhouse, and I drove to and from yours and Junior’s packs alone yesterday. I needed something to focus on while trying to drown out Tommy’s tone-deaf singing today.”

“HEY ELARA!” Tommy’s loud, sing-song voice echoed, followed by exaggerated kissing sounds and then a muffled ‘oomph.’

Ben chuckled softly—probably as close to laughter as I’d hear from him. “Anyway, I was saying, what if all of this—the drugs, the rumors, the devices, and your mom—are connected somehow? The timing’s too coincidental. We just need to figure out how it all fits.”

“We?” My stomach fluttered unexpectedly. I couldn’t afford to feel this way. He had a girlfriend, or someone he wasn’t ready to give up for the bond.

“Yes, ‘we.’ Maybe we can talk to your dad. He has to have some insight. I’ll be back in a few days,” he growled. “I’m too deep into this now, with you and Junior. I need to see it through. It feels like we’re getting close.” The fluttering in my stomach turned heavy, like lead. Clearly, this was just a job to him.

“Elara?”

“Hmm?” I realized he’d been talking and I’d missed it.

“I said, send me your number so we don’t have to go through Jax if we have info.”

“This works. We’re always together anyway...”

“Elara.” His voice dropped low and stern, making me shiver. “Send me your contact from Jax’s phone. Now. I don’t like extra steps or hoops to jump through.” That growl in his tone made me freeze. “I’m waiting.”

Finally, I shared the contact. I wasn’t sure why I’d been hesitating. He was right—cutting out the middleman was better. But when Jax and Dev shared information, it was easier to keep my distance. I didn’t want to get too attached to his voice.

“Got it.” His voice was muffled as I assumed he pulled the phone away to check. “Now...”

“Elara! I hate to interrupt this absolutely terrible flirting session, but I need your boy...” Ben’s voice trailed off as Tommy shouted over him, followed by a series of muffled grunts, groans, and the rustling of fabric.

I smiled, imagining them squabbling like kids in the car.

“We’ll talk soon,” Ben’s gravelly voice said before the line went silent.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 353

28 – Ben

“What’s going on with you two? You’re acting like you’ve never spoken to someone of the opposite sex before. And I know that’s not true for either of you,” Tommy teased, raising an eyebrow as we sat in the car.

“There’s nothing weird between us,” I replied sharply, stepping out of the vehicle to end the conversation. “Right now, she’s the only real target. Everything else feels like a distraction. She doesn’t accept help unless it’s forced on her. She trusts no one. Honestly, I think that’s because someone manipulated her into being that way.”

Tommy met me at the back of the SUV, ready to switch shifts on patrol. But he wasn’t finished talking about it yet.

“Okay, I think I’m starting to get it,” he said with a smirk.

I was already peeling off my shirt and tossing it into the back of the vehicle. “I’m almost too scared to ask—what’s your take on me?”

“You’re a control freak with a hero complex. You thrive on this mess,” he laughed, stripping off his clothes and shifting before I could even fire back a response. Typical asshole.

After changing, I shifted and prepared to jump into patrol mode. So far, everything was running smoothly, but with everything happening back home and Ryker's reputation on the line, we weren't taking any chances. Just an hour remained on the trip before Danny and Josh, Ryker's Delta and Beta, would join us for backup.

"Speak of the devil," I muttered as Josh's wolf appeared, running up to us and falling into line.

"There's been a slight change of plans," Josh said, his tone grim. "The last couple of days have been a complete nightmare."

"What's going on? Is everyone okay?" My mind immediately went to Kennedy. She's human—she needs all the protection she can get.

"It's a long story, but the Luna..." Josh began.

"What happened to Kennedy?!" I snapped, my wolf stumbling at my outburst. "Does Jeremiah know?"

"Calm down. Our pack has been through enough in the last 48 hours," Josh said firmly. "And my Luna—your friend," I could hear the growl in both Josh's and his wolf's voices, "handled one of the threats early this morning, all on her own. And before you lose it, she's fine. She's at home resting, where she'll stay undisturbed until Ryker says otherwise."

Tommy jumped in, sensing my frustration. "So, where are we headed now? I know that explanation won't cut it with you, and you're about to start something your wolf will have to back up."

My wolf cared for Kennedy too, but not the way I did. The internal battle raged harder inside me.

"We're going to the arena. A rogue pack has been lingering near our borders, and the Luna gave them refuge after one of their own killed a traitor with her bare hands."

"Wait, Kennedy did that?" Tommy laughed in disbelief.

"Yeah. Amy had it coming. Kennedy hates being underestimated just because she's human. Amy thought she could just waltz in and take the Luna's place. Kennedy beat her down—after Amy had her kidnapped, no less. Then Kennedy forced Amy to accept her mate's rejection so he wouldn't have to watch her die, and finally strangled her to death. Like I said, the last two days have been insane."

"How was Kennedy taken? How long was she gone? And who even thinks about a mate's feelings before delivering a killing blow?" I asked, still trying to process everything.

"The Luna does—especially when the rogue in question helped save her life. She earned loyalty from many of those rogues simply by showing kindness," Josh explained.

"That sounds just like Kennedy," Tommy chuckled again.

“The rogues used a distraction to snatch her. She managed to warn us through a mindlink—we still don’t know how. She was only gone for a few hours, fought back, and left a blood trail for us to follow. Just don’t mention any of that around Ryker or Bennet. They’re both furious she was taken and hurt. ‘Sensitive’ doesn’t even begin to cover how they feel about it.”

“But she’s okay now? Kennedy’s unharmed?” I pressed.

“She fought wolves after being abducted and was held captive by some seriously abusive, misogynistic jerks. No, she wasn’t unharmed. But she’s home safe and healing. That’s why there’s a strict ‘do not disturb’ order. Rayna’s going to her mom’s place for the rest of the day, and you guys can help Greta, Danny, and me with the rogues. Some of them are in rough shape.”

We finished the patrol in silence. As soon as we crossed into Dark Moon territory, we all shifted back to give our wolves a break. Jason took Rayna to her parents’ cabin, while Jeremiah, Josh, and I followed in the other vehicles toward the arena.

With every mile closer, my agitation grew. How the hell did this massive, feared pack get attacked? How did Kennedy get caught in the middle? Was Ryker really that careless with her? Is that why she hasn’t been able to contact anyone—because he locks her away until he needs her for appearances? I remembered the counselor mentioning that Kennedy had been inconsistent with schoolwork and follow-ups during winter and spring. That wasn’t like her at all. I wouldn’t feel at ease until I saw her standing right in front of me. And judging by the situation, that wasn’t going to happen anytime soon.

Pulling up to the arena, I immediately noticed the heavy security. Patrol wolves paced the upper levels of the stadium seating. The gates were shut tight, guarded by two more wolves.

“What the hell is all this?” I whispered, knowing Josh could hear me.

“It’s complicated,” he replied. “We’ve found a few sympathizers who’ve been brainwashed beyond help. The Luna wanted to help everyone, but the Alpha has other ideas. So, everyone has to face a trial of sorts. That’s where you guys come in. We need to figure out if any of them pose a threat to the Luna. She was the original target, so she’s the top priority now. Ryker wants these trials done before the Luna returns, so her emotions don’t influence the decisions. She’s too kind and trusting for her own good.”

“That’s my Kennedy,” I murmured with a suppressed smile. She’s such a stubborn pain in the ass. At least she’s making things difficult for these guys.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 354

29 – Ben

Josh's voice cut through the quiet as we walked. "The biggest discovery we've made is that they used magic to mask their scents from us." I froze immediately, stopping dead in my tracks. Suddenly, I felt a shove from behind—Tommy had bumped into me.

"What the hell, man?" he snapped, pushing past me with a glare.

"Hold on, Josh," I called out, jogging to catch up. "Did you say magic? What kind of magic?"

Josh glanced over his shoulder, his expression grim. "Yeah, they managed to hide themselves using magic, which is something we haven't figured out yet. None of us here can wield magic, especially not illusion magic. So, that means someone else is—or was—working with them."

I couldn't help but let a flicker of hope creep into my voice. "You haven't found any witches among the group?"

Josh gave me a strange look but kept moving forward without answering.

We approached a line of wolves waiting for food, their gaunt faces and hollow eyes telling stories of hunger and hardship. Nearby, another group stood in two perfect rows, like they were at a job interview. A few stern, older wolves sat at a long table, scribbling notes and asking questions that were too quiet to hear.

Tommy glanced at the scene and asked, "Are you seriously going to take all of them in?"

"If they want to stay, then yes," Josh replied. "Some were thankful we helped, but a few prefer the nomadic life and have moved on."

Tommy's voice rose in disbelief. "And you just let them leave?"

I felt a surge of relief that he said it aloud.

Josh shrugged. "If they leave peacefully, then yes. Our pack operates differently because of its size. We don't need members who don't want to be here, but we also don't give second chances. Once someone makes up their mind, that's it. We don't have the time or patience for people who can't commit."

He led us to a group of people who looked ready to begin training. "These folks are warriors by blood or experience but haven't been properly trained. We'll start with them. Many have asked to join Luna's detail, so they'll have some real work to do."

I couldn't hide my irritation. "Wait, so they get to protect Kennedy? The same people who originally came to kidnap and harm her? Who made that dumb decision?"

Before Josh could answer, a large warrior stepped forward, his presence imposing. He wasn't bigger than me, but his threatening demeanor was unmistakable.

"Watch your mouth, boy. Show some respect when you speak of the Luna," he growled.

Josh introduced us without missing a beat. “This is Calvin. Calvin, this is Ben, the Beta from Silver Crescent and one of Luna Kennedy’s oldest friends.” He sounded tired of this conversation, like he’d repeated it too many times.

I squared my shoulders and met Calvin’s glare head-on. If he wanted to protect her, he’d better be able to back it up.

Calvin’s low growl sent a shiver down my spine. “I’ve seen that look before. Don’t get any ideas about the Luna. She’s taken. Keep your distance, pup.”

Pup? Who the hell was he calling a pup?

Tommy stepped between us, raising his hands. “Okay, gentlemen, enough. If this is a pissing contest, it’s over here.” He motioned to the side, then guided us both into sparring stances. “Since you two seem to have the exact same protective instincts for Luna Kennedy, I’m going to be the referee. Don’t glare at me like that—you both look homicidal and you’re scaring the kids. Knock it off, get it out of your system, and then we can move on.”

He rolled his eyes, clearly used to this kind of tension.

I tuned into the sounds around me—the shuffle of feet, the quiet breaths, the distant rustle of leaves—but my focus remained locked on Calvin. I couldn’t afford to be caught off guard, especially with him possibly cheating or getting help from behind.

We circled each other cautiously. I waited for him to make the first move; I wasn’t about to waste energy chasing him or getting into a slap fight. Finally, he lunged. His movements were solid, but it was clear he hadn’t been formally trained. He wasn’t as fast as me.

I shifted just enough to let him duck low, aiming for my legs. At the last second, I spun, using his momentum against him. I pushed his head to the ground and flipped his legs over his head, pinning him flat on his back.

“Never go for the obvious when facing an opponent you haven’t fought before,” I said, keeping my voice low but firm. “And never lose sight of their eyes.” If he really wanted to protect her, he had a lot to learn.

I offered my hand to help him up. He hesitated but accepted it reluctantly. Once he was back on his feet, I stepped back to my starting spot.

“Again,” I growled, ready to go another round.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 355

Throughout the entire training session, I cling to Calvin like a shadow, unwilling to let him out of my sight. The other warriors are just that—warriors—but Calvin seems to hold a special place in his heart for Kennedy. I’m determined to figure out what his true intentions

are. After all, he warned me not to make any moves on her, so clearly, she isn't the object of his obsession.

Josh approaches, slipping into our line of sight with a casual air. "Lunch. Eat well. We'll have dinner later tonight after the Luna ceremony, so the kitchen omegas will be swamped."

We start walking together, but curiosity gets the better of me. "So, what's your deal with Ken? And don't give me that look—Josh already told you she was my friend before she became your Luna."

Josh shrugs nonchalantly. "She saved my mate and my pup."

That's it? I raise an eyebrow. "But I don't see any pups around."

"Not yet," he says quietly. "There were two of us who found mates during all this, and pups are on the way. The Luna made sure both females were taken to the dorms after the fight last night." He gestures vaguely behind him. "They got care before anyone else—even before herself and her warriors. She actually refused treatment and had to fight the Alpha over it." A faint smile tugs at his lips. "She didn't know us or who to trust, but she still took care of us. She's the reason we're all still here, the only reason any of these Dark Moon guys are giving us a chance. She earned every bit of our loyalty."

"Just like that?" I ask, incredulous.

"Yeah, just like that, pretty boy. You probably never saw your pack torn apart and then had to wander aimlessly with only a handful of survivors. To be looked down on by other packs as worthless or less than human. Or, like our former leaders did, treated as expendable pawns to gain power. She's the first person in five years who's ever looked at me like I'm a person."

I pause, absorbing his words. "How were your former leaders using magic? Josh said you all moved without being detected."

"I wasn't high enough in the ranks to know the details. I don't even think Finn knew, and he was our acting Alpha."

"Acting Alpha?" I ask as we reach the table and join the line.

"Yeah. Amy and Claude were the masterminds, but they were clever enough to put Finn in charge. That turned out to be a mistake on their part." He smiles knowingly.

"How so?"

"Your friend, of course." He laughs, glancing at me. Of course Kennedy is tangled up in this too. "I'm not sure exactly what happened—Finn still won't talk about it—but when the Luna was being held captive..." His wolf growls softly, and his aura flares briefly. "Relax, no one here had anything to do with that. Every one of those bastards died for touching her. Anyway, the Luna and Finn had a conversation, then chaos erupted. Finn protected her and

got her back to the Alpha. He even let the Alpha beat him up until the Luna stopped the whole damn fight with her aura and a Luna command.”

“Her aura and a Luna command? She’s human! How is that even possible?”

“That’s the mystery none of us can figure out. But she stopped the fight and saved a lot of lives.”

Tommy bumps into me as we all search for a place to sit and eat. “Man, these people really think Ken walks on water.”

I can’t hide the sarcasm in my reply. “Yeah, I’m starting to get that impression.”

“How the hell does she do that? Seriously. Remember the first time we were here, and she had all those pups following her like some kind of pied piper? Even Ryker was shocked.”

Speaking of Ryker, I ask, “Where is he? I haven’t seen him yet.”

“He’s been in and out all day, probably making plans for the ceremony,” Josh says. “He likely stopped by to see Rayna too.”

“So he’s really going to try to bring her into the pack and mark her? Isn’t he worried about her safety?”

“I think he’d do anything she tells him to,” Calvin jumps in with a grin. “He’s so whipped—it’s kind of awesome.”

“Are we talking about the same guy?” Tommy questions. “The Ryker we know hates everyone and only talks to his team and family. He’s intimidating just standing in a room.”

“Oh yeah, that’s how he is when she’s not around. But the minute she’s nearby, she’s his entire world. And I’ve only seen them together today.” Calvin raises his eyebrows and stuffs a bite of sandwich into his mouth, clearly amused.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 356

30 – Ben

“That’s something I definitely need to see,” Tommy chuckled, his mouth full as he continued eating his meal.

“We really have to dig deeper into this whole witch business. It sounds a lot like what Elara’s been dealing with over in Black Claw,” I said, glancing over at my Delta.

Jason had mentioned working alongside some of Ryker’s men, and he’d brought up magic too.

“When did you get a chance to talk to him? He’s been on the far side of the arena the entire time,” I asked.

“You were too busy with your whole ‘nobody’s good enough for Kennedy’ fight,” Calvin teased, grinning at his own jab.

“Shut it,” I snapped.

“Hey, he said it, not me. And honestly, neither of you are wrong,” Calvin shrugged, quickly finishing the last bite in his mouth before swallowing. “I’ve got to go see my girl now. I’ll catch up with you guys later.” He gave my back a friendly slap and walked off.

“How is that even possible? I got the impression Ken wasn’t doing well being here,” I muttered.

“Are you sure you’re not just projecting your worries?” Tommy asked, following me as we headed to toss out our trash.

“F\*ck off. You felt it too, don’t pretend otherwise. The last time we all talked to her, she was off. She’s never been good at lying, not even for a second,” I said, my voice low but firm.

“Well, everyone here is in love with her, so it must be fine, right?” Tommy teased again.

“I just want to be sure Ken isn’t being forced into anything,” I admitted, concern tightening my chest.

“You know Ken. Would she ever let anyone force her to do something against her will?” Tommy asked, cocking an eyebrow.

“She’s human, Tommy. If someone wanted to, they could force her. And if that’s the case, I’m going to rip whoever did it to shreds,” I growled, my wolf stirring angrily inside me. Kennedy might not be mine, but that wouldn’t stop me from protecting her with everything I have.

“Well, I don’t think that’s what’s happening. And you need to get your head in the game—he’s coming over, and neither Kennedy nor Rayna will appreciate you starting trouble with him,” Tommy warned.

I glanced up just in time to see Jeremiah, Josh, and Ryker making their way toward us.

“You alright?” A hand landed on my shoulder, and I turned to see Jason standing beside me. I hadn’t even noticed him approach. He was trying to hide a smile.

“F\*ck off,” was all I could manage. I sounded like an idiot, and I knew it, but I just couldn’t seem to fix the mess of emotions inside me. My agitation was obvious, and the last thing I needed was for someone to think I was trying to challenge Ryker. Kennedy wasn’t my mate—she wasn’t Elara. I knew that, yet the overwhelming need to protect her, to keep her safe at all costs, wouldn’t switch off. I took a deep breath, trying to distract myself. I couldn’t

keep staring at Ryker like a fool. “Where were you anyway?” I asked Jason, forcing myself to focus fully on him.

“I was following a trail,” he replied.

“What trail? We just got here,” I said, crossing my arms, intrigued.

“I know, that’s what confused me too. I caught a scent—ozone and rust—just like the cave on Junior’s territory,” he said, mirroring my stance. “Exactly the same smell.”

I lowered my voice, not wanting Jeremiah or Ryker to panic over their mates. “Do you think we were followed? Or is it just a coincidence?”

“My gut says we were followed, but if that’s true, we should have caught the scent on the way here,” Jason whispered.

“Not if it’s a witch. I’ve heard some high-ranking ones can teleport or whatever they call it,” Tommy added.

“If we were followed by a witch, the question is who they’re tracking. Is it Rayna? That’s probably Jeremiah’s first thought. Kennedy? Or maybe one of us helping out at Elara’s pack?” Jason raised his eyebrows at me. If anyone thought the girls were in danger, this pack would be on lockdown immediately.

“What’s going on?” Jer’s deep, growly voice came from behind me, and I realized I hadn’t masked my expression or feelings well enough.

I decided to just get it out there. “Jason and I think magic might have followed us from Black Claw.”

“Hold on—what magic?” Josh stepped forward, squaring up to me. “We’ve got enough on our plates without dragging in whatever drama you’re involved in. Our Luna has been through hell in the last…” He shot Ryker a quick, meaningful glance that I caught, “...well, way too long. She deserves a Luna ceremony without any incidents.”

“What did you do?!” I growled, not caring that we were in the middle of his pack territory, surrounded by his warriors. If Ryker had done anything to Kennedy, he would pay.

“All right, gentlemen. We need to change locations,” Greta appeared suddenly between Ryker and me. Jer grabbed my arm, Jason stood to my left, and Tommy stayed behind me. Josh, Greta, and Danny did the same for Ryker, but he shrugged them off.

“Not the packhouse. This way,” Ryker grumbled.

“Why not the packhouse? Why are you keeping her from us?” I spat over my shoulder, and he turned sharply. Our friends were letting us handle this but staying close enough to intervene if needed.

“It’s her birthday, asshole. She hasn’t seen any of you in almost a year. You all being here is her present—a surprise. As protective as you are, you don’t seem to catch on quickly,” he said before turning and walking into the building adjacent to the arena.

I was stunned. I knew the date was coming up, but I’d been so distracted working with the southern packs that I’d lost track of time. I must have followed them inside without thinking, because suddenly we were in a meeting room that looked more suited for serious negotiations than anything else.

“Just so we’re all clear, her Luna ceremony is a surprise as well. Bennet is keeping her busy today. Now, tell us about the magic you think followed you,” Ryker said, closing the subject for the moment.

Jason, Tommy, and I took turns explaining everything we’d encountered in Black Claw and Red Fang.

“What we’ve figured out is that teenage wolves are being used as mules for ingredients—and probably the finished drugs too. The problem is, the only time we find evidence of these drugs is when someone dies, and traces linger in their bloodstream. No neighboring packs seem to be aware of any issues. Junior and Elara appear to be the main targets, likely because they’re both transitioning to Alpha under unusual circumstances. Junior’s only sixteen, so he’s seen as weak or an easy target—young and inexperienced, still learning his role,” I said, daring a glance at Ryker. He was doing the same, and I knew it wasn’t easy for him. “He’s also considered vulnerable because his father is dead. Elara, as a female Alpha, has faced resistance since the day her father announced she’d be the next Alpha, not her mate.”

“What does this have to do with magic?” Danny asked.

“That ozone and rust smell is the same scent we found in the cave Elara and Ben discovered on Junior’s territory near the waterfront,” Jason said, pacing the room thoughtfully.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 357

31 – Ben

“We only managed to get inside the cave once. Inside, there were piles of what looked like supplies and ingredients matching the drugs we’ve discovered. Someone’s definitely using magic to hide and guard it now. And I’m convinced there are other spots being used to stash this contraband,” I explain, my voice low but urgent.

“No one’s been able to enter the cave since Elara and Ben first found it. It seems like everything’s been cleared out, but I’ve been researching magic detection. That strange ozone scent—I can’t quite place it—but the rusty smell? That’s supposed to come from a protection spell, which actually makes sense. So that odor is probably part of the illusion covering the cave. But here’s what puzzles me: why are those two distinct smells present

now? That's what I was tracking today. I followed the trail to the edge of the forest on your west side, and then it just vanished—same as every other lead I've uncovered."

Ryker nodded thoughtfully. "We'll keep an eye on it now that we know what to look for. I'll also get our elders involved to see if they can dig up any information on magic that might help us." His tone was calm but firm. "You all should get ready for the ceremony. Bennet is keeping Kennedy in her office with my mother's help, so please stay in your rooms until Robin comes to get you. Ben, hang back for a moment."

The room went quiet, all eyes locking onto me. "What?!" I blurted, surprised by the sudden command.

Ryker's gaze hardened. "Clearly, we need to talk. This doesn't concern anyone else. Move aside." His words carried an unspoken power, and Jeremiah stood firm, watching us both closely.

"It'll be fine. Rayna and Kennedy would kill us if we caused too much damage," I joked weakly, though deep down I knew better. If Ryker wanted to, he could hurt me badly—and none of my friends could stop him. I was in his pack, and I had just publicly questioned his loyalty to his Luna and my friend. I could feel the weight of that choice pressing down on me.

Jeremiah gave Ryker a nod. "Don't hurt him too badly. He's got a pack to go back to."

Ryker's eyes flicked between us, a sharp glint in them, until Jeremiah quietly closed the door behind him. "Spit it out. Whatever your damn problem is with me, say it now. I won't let you ruin her day by being an asshole."

I took a deep breath, anger bubbling beneath the surface. "How am I the asshole for wanting to protect her? You didn't want her—you made that clear when you ripped her from her home without so much as a backward glance. You took her because your wolf wouldn't leave her behind. You gave her no choice, no options. Then, for a whole year, we heard from her maybe four times. Her half-hearted answers made us all worry, but Rayna told us to leave you alone. Then, after Christmas—her favorite holiday—nothing. No contact. She didn't even reach out to Jer. What did you do to her?!" My voice cracked with venom, rising louder with each word, but Ryker just stood there, expression unreadable. That only fueled my frustration. I had to force myself to stay rooted where I was, all the strength of my wolf barely holding me steady.

He sank into the chair at the head of the table, staring off into nothingness. "What I did was isolate and neglect her. I'll spend every waking hour for the rest of my life trying to make up for it." His words hit me like a shockwave. I was frozen, unable to move. This wasn't the answer I was expecting. "I did everything wrong that could possibly be done, and it led to her being taken from me two nights ago. But she's still here—with me—so I'll give her anything she wants. Even you." He looked up, eyes raw and broken in a way I'd never seen before.

"Me? What do I have to do with this?" I asked, confused and wary.

He shook his head slowly. “I’ve seen the way you’ve always looked at her. Don’t tell me it means nothing.” His voice softened. “You love her. It’s in every little thing you do, every word you say when it concerns her. If she sees you later and tells me she wants you around for good, it’ll tear me apart—but I’ll make it happen. For her.”

## Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

### Chapter 358

I hadn’t expected to find myself sharing a vulnerable moment with the most intimidating Alpha around, yet here I was, settling into a chair halfway down the long, oval table from him. The room was quiet except for the faint hum of distant voices outside. I exhaled slowly, trying to steady my scattered thoughts. I deliberately kept some distance between us—I wasn’t sure how he’d react to what I was about to reveal. “I do love her,” I began, my voice steady but low. “I’ve always loved her. She was my first in so many ways. I probably always will love her, in some form or another. But I’m not in love with her. There’s a huge difference between those feelings. Besides, I have my own mate to contend with—one who’s not interested in being my mate.” I leaned forward, resting my elbows on the table, rubbing my face as if trying to scrub away the chaos that my life had become.

He let out a chuckle, the kind that grated on my nerves. “It’s the female Alpha, isn’t it?” he said, amusement clear in his voice. Of course, this bastard was laughing at me now. “Figures—you’d need someone more complicated than Kennedy.”

“That she is,” I admitted, a bitter edge in my tone. “But I can’t blame her. Her elders, even her father’s team, don’t stand behind her. I think their Gamma is actually working against her.”

He raised an eyebrow. “Why haven’t you knocked him out yet?”

I shook my head. “I don’t have concrete proof. But the way he acts around her? It’s shady as hell. And if he ever threatened her, she wouldn’t need me to handle it—she’d take care of him herself.”

“Does anyone else know about this?” he asked.

“Kind of. It’s obvious there’s tension, but neither of us has acknowledged it openly. Our friends all suspect something and tease us relentlessly. Honestly, when I found out Rayna was pregnant with twins, I was more relieved to escape the spotlight than thrilled about Jer becoming a dad.”

He nodded thoughtfully. “I think things will work out. And if you need anything to support your mate or her pack, don’t hesitate to ask.” I gave a small nod in return. “Also, I haven’t told Jeremiah or my sister about what Kennedy and I have been facing. They need to come to terms with it on their own. But I can guarantee you, even pregnant, my sister would try to kill me if she found out. If Kennedy decides to share, I’ll accept the consequences, but until then, keep this between us.” He pushed back his chair, rose, and headed toward the door. “Now, let’s get through this ceremony.” I followed him without hesitation.

“Are you not scared for her? What will you do if something goes wrong?” I asked quietly as we walked.

“Doc Bradshaw is on standby,” he replied, his voice calm. “But after yesterday, I don’t think we’ll need him.”

Curiosity got the better of me. “Tell me about that. She used a mindlink and a Luna Aura... on you?!”

“Yeah,” he said, a hint of awe in his voice. “She stopped two completely different packs dead in their tracks with a single command and stopped me from killing Finn. I’ve never heard of an initiated Luna doing that. Kennedy’s an unmarked Luna—she’s special. She was always meant to lead a pack, based on how she was raised. At least, that’s what I hope the Goddess intended. After her reaction at Jeremiah and Rayna’s ceremony, I owe it to her to try. No one else has.” He paused, then looked at me. “What will you do when your mate is ready? That will make you an Alpha. How does her Beta feel about a second male showing up and doing his job?”

I shook my head with a faint smile. “First, I’m no Alpha—she is. And she doesn’t have a Beta. Her father’s team is a mess. His Beta sticks close to him and will do the job, but not for her. He has no children, so there’s no lineage. The Delta’s son is only a year old, so he won’t be taking the title anytime soon. And the Gamma? He’s an asshole I’d replace in a heartbeat.”

He chuckled again. “I don’t think I’ve ever heard of an Alpha and Beta both being mated and holding those titles in the same pack. This is going to be interesting.”

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

Chapter 359

32 – Elara

“I want one of these bastards alive! They’re not slipping away this time—I need answers!” I bark into the comms, my voice sharp and urgent as I rally my team.

For the past hour, we’ve been hot on the trail of this rogue group, chasing them relentlessly. We tore through Junior’s territory without pause, pushing into the neutral zone. I suspect they hoped we’d halt at the borders, but they badly miscalculated. I reached out to Junior, and his pack quickly joined us. Together, we just barely missed capturing one of the five rogues we’re tracking. They managed to injure him, though, and that’s where Junior’s focus is locked. Meanwhile, my attention is fixed on the one leading the retreat. How the hell are they moving so fast? As an Alpha, even on a bad day and while transitioning, I should be able to outrun them.

“Got him!” Junior’s voice crackles through the link, and I immediately pass the news to my team.

“Do we push forward for the leader, or settle for what we’ve caught?” I ask, linking Junior, Jax, and Dev.

Junior’s reply is blunt. “I want that asshole, but we can’t afford to waste energy.”

“I’m with you. We’re already too deep into enemy territory. What if this is just a distraction?” my warriors add their voices.

“We’ve got a truck en route. Regroup with us, and we’ll get you home so you can rest,” Junior offers. Over the last few months, he’s really stepped up. He’s shaping into a remarkable leader.

“I want to speak to this prick before we head back,” I insist.

“Then he’s yours. He just crossed my land. But I’d like to know how he knows the terrain so well. If you can get that answer before tearing him apart, I’d appreciate it,” Junior replies with a dry edge.

We make it back to Junior’s place faster than I expected. His warriors have the rogue cuffed in silver shackles, blindfolded, and panting heavily from the chase.

“What happened to him?” I ask, eyeing Junior.

“He apparently thought it was a good idea to piss off my guys by flirting with every female that passed by—including my mother,” Junior says, a bitter smile crossing his face. The rogue grins like it’s some kind of joke. “My guess? He was trying to provoke the wrong guy—someone who’d kill him in a blind rage before we could get any answers. Honestly, if he gives you trouble, I’m not against you taking his eyes one at a time.”

The rogue flashes a smile again, revealing yellowed teeth. He clearly underestimates us. I’ll make sure to use that against him.

“Cells?” I ask Junior.

“Follow me.” He nods, and his men grab the rogue under each arm, dragging him along. I can tell he’s going to be as difficult as possible.

Jax, Dev, and I hang back for now. The room is thick with scents—too many for him to single us out individually. But soon enough, he’ll realize he’s dealing with an Alpha.

“What about your parents?” Dev asks, breaking the tense silence.

“I linked Richard. He can be an ass to me, but he’s loyal to my dad. I have to trust him to keep them safe. I need you guys here now,” I admit, the weight of responsibility pressing down. We’re stretched thin, and my trust in many people has eroded. It’s isolating and exhausting. Honestly, I’m starting to agree with Ben—this is exactly what these rogues want.

The rogue is shoved into a chair in the center of a cold, concrete room. It feels like something out of a mafia movie—there’s a drain embedded in the floor’s center and a table pushed against a side wall, positioned so the interrogator sits closest to the only door.

For now, I leave his blindfold on. If Junior wants his eyes, we’ll take them. This is Jaxon’s favorite part.

“Alright, let’s start simple. What pack are you from?” I ask quietly. His scent confirms he’s a rogue; pack wolves carry a distinct aroma tied to their Alpha, which helps us identify friend from foe, especially when everyone can shift shapes.

## **Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below**

### Chapter 360

“What, the guys who tied me up weren’t brave enough to question me themselves, so they sent some wh\*re to try and tempt me?” I could see Jax and Dev shift uncomfortably at the same time as I released a subtle wave of my aura. It was just enough to make them feel the tension in the room, but not so overpowering that it would give me away completely. Still, I knew they wouldn’t let him use my gender as a weapon against me during this interrogation.

“I have zero intention of ‘tempting’ you,” I said, my voice thick with disgust. Honestly, he wasn’t even worth the effort to look at. He was scrawny for a wolf, clearly malnourished, with sallow skin and dirty brown hair that hung in greasy strands. His overall appearance was filthy and unkempt. He stood about my height—a trivial detail, but one that caught my eye nonetheless.

My wolf growled low in my mind, “He’s not Ben, so he’s not worth our time or attention.”

I nodded internally, trying to push away the distraction. “I know you think the world of Ben and his wolf, but remember, he’s got a thing for a blonde Barbie. So much so that he still keeps her picture on his phone months after finding his mate. Right now, he’s irrelevant. We have work to do.”

The way the man’s eyes roamed over me told me he knew exactly who I was—or at least that I was an Alpha. He seemed eager to meet his end quickly, hoping to avoid giving us any useful information.

“Let’s try another approach,” Jax said, stepping forward. “Why risk crossing three borders? You had nothing on you—no drugs, no supplies. Why not take the longer route? Save yourself the trouble.”

The man shrugged, a hiss escaping him as the silver cuffs shifted on his wrists. “Shortcuts are always better.”

Dev smirked, trying to provoke him. “So you spend a lot of time running? You’re pretty fast for someone with nowhere to be.”

“Meh, not really,” he replied, his tone dismissive. “Sometimes being fast is all the bosses need.” Then, abruptly, he went silent.

“So, you are a mule then,” I said, narrowing my eyes.

“No, I’m a freelancer. Just passing through. I’m not your guy.”

“Bad time to be an entrepreneur,” Jax said, stepping closer. “That makes you expendable. You’re a loose end they’ll want to tie up. Who’s paying you right now?”

The man’s eyes flickered with a mix of defiance and weariness. “You guys haven’t done this before, have you? You should just get to the beating part and get it over with.”

Jax took the bait and slammed an open palm across the man’s face. Blood immediately welled from the side of his mouth and nose.

“Any clue what you’re transporting?” Jax demanded.

“Nope,” the man said, punctuating his answer with a sharp ‘P.’

Dev stepped forward, his fist closing tightly as he delivered a blow closer to the man’s eye socket. We all heard the sickening crack of bone.

“That works for me,” Dev said grimly. “Let’s see if Junior has a truck we can borrow.”

The man coughed, blood dripping from his lips. “You gonna find a dumpsite for me? You know they’ll find me.”

I let out a confident, almost mocking laugh. “You really think we’re going to let you walk free? No. He was right,” I said, nodding toward Jax, “you’re expendable. No one’s looking for you, no one cares. What they will care about is finding out you’re locked up in my cells, strung up like a deer for processing. What they’ll care about is how much information you’re giving us because you can’t handle the torture.”

“I haven’t told you sh\*t,” he spat at me, frustration clearly bubbling beneath the surface.

“They don’t know that yet,” I said, turning toward the cell door. “They’ll believe any rumor we spread. Let’s move.”

Jax and Dev exchanged a look, then took turns knocking the man out the hard way as I headed toward the door, the cold metal bars closing behind us with a sharp clang.