

Letters Sent To Eternity

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 371

39 – Elara

I'm struggling fiercely, clawing and fighting to make him release me. Honestly, I wouldn't even mind if we both tumbled to the ground in the process. I just need his hands off me. The electric buzz his touch sends through me is oddly soothing, but my body doesn't want that right now—my mind definitely doesn't. He abandoned me when everything fell apart, left me to face the chaos alone. He doesn't get to return now, playing the hero. I refuse to be a backup plan or a consolation prize.

The world spins wildly as I'm thrown into the air, but I don't crash onto anything. His arms catch me with ease, steady and sure. I blink, and suddenly we're standing in my bathroom.

"Alright, can you manage a shower on your own, or do I have to help you?" His voice is low, and he leans in, tightening his hold around my waist and thighs just a bit, adding a sharp edge to the moment.

"F*ck you," I snap back, my voice fierce. "Who do you think you are, telling me what to do? I'm the Alpha of this pack." The threat sounds hollow, even to me, as he cradles me effortlessly.

"Then act like it." His growl is deep, and my breath catches in my throat. We're almost nose to nose, and of all the things he could have said, those words cut the deepest. "You're snapping at everyone, pushing people too hard without giving them a break. You're playing right into the hands of whoever's trying to take everything from you. Get in the shower. Clear your head. Then we'll talk." He slides me down his body slowly but never loosens his grip.

"I don't want to talk to you." The words escape as a quiet, defeated whisper. Now that he's said it aloud, I can't unhear it. I'm falling into the trap everyone expects of a female Alpha—burning out, breaking down. I know it. But I can't seem to push past this fierce, burning need for revenge coursing through my veins for my parents.

"It's not a choice, Elara. Now move, before I make you." His hands squeeze my hips once more before he steps back, and I immediately miss the warmth of his touch. "Last chance to use your free will." There's a teasing laugh in his words, and I blink, caught off guard. I must have been spacing out, staring at him. Maybe I'm more exhausted than I thought.

I exhale sharply and turn toward the shower. His scent lingers faintly as he slips out of the bathroom without a sound. Another dull ache presses against my heart. There's something about my mate not wanting to stay with me in this vulnerable moment—or be tempted to linger while I'm naked in the shower—that bruises my pride.

I won't admit it aloud to him or anyone else, but he was right. The shower helped clear my foggy mind and gather my thoughts. I've been treating Melanie like an enemy, and I haven't spoken to Jax or Dev in days. They've been just as busy, just as invested, trying to figure out how someone got to my mother—how that weakened my father enough for three wolves to take him down, judging by the wounds. I haven't thought about the rogue situation or the drugs or any of it in a week, and it's probably all connected. I let myself get blindsided—and then distracted.

I step out and see Ben staring at his phone. My face tightens into a scowl. The image on his lock screen is enough to drain the renewed energy I'd just gathered. I quickly look away before he notices and head to the closet. Whatever he wants to say needs to be brief—because as much as I needed that mental break, I have work to do. Someone is trying to take my pack. That much is painfully clear. I'm the target because I'm a girl—annoying, but obvious. This has probably been brewing for years. Again, I won't tell Ben he was right. I'm just tired of hitting dead ends. It shouldn't be this difficult to flush out one or two rogues.

"It doesn't take that long to throw on leggings and a t-shirt," his deep, melodic voice calls from the other room, and I shake my head. His tone is irritatingly condescending. I take a deep breath in and then exhale slowly. Maybe I need another. In... out. "Today, Alpha. I thought you had stuff to do."

I might kill him before we even leave this room. I step out and lean against the closet doorway, trying—and probably failing—to look calm and confident. "Talk, Beta." I'm not foolish enough to walk away. He's already shown twice he's willing to manhandle me. I just want this over with.

He sighs but stays put on the couch. Finally, he seems to get that I need space. "Alpha James put out some feelers and got intel on a coven of witches. The coven split about a decade ago—some want to enslave wolves, use us as bodyguards, while others believe we should have free will. He thinks the former has been attacking you and Junior for years. Junior's young, and the discord around you being a female Alpha is well known. The faction that doesn't want to hurt us is hiding in a forest outside the White Diamond pack, keeping to themselves, according to his info. The coven that wants you is called Ember and Ash, led by someone named Eliza. They live among humans but hate them for some reason and want to be more powerful than the other supernaturals."

I rub my face and move toward him. I feel the pull, and I want to resist, but I can't. I'm too drained to fight the tug my wolf feels for him. "So, what am I supposed to do with this information?" I ask, my hands covering my face. Information means nothing if it's not actionable.

"First, you're going to sleep—and eat—so you can think clearly. Then we'll check in with Tommy. He stayed behind in Dark Moon to work with the Elders, gathering intel on how to detect and fight the magic being used against us. Now that we know it's magic, we can work

on breaking down their wards and protections. That's probably why we can't scent anyone, why they vanish so fast."

"I can't sleep," I whisper. My father's cries of pain echo in my mind whenever I close my eyes.

"You can. You're safe. I'm here now. Lay down and sleep." He nods toward my bed from the couch, clearly not planning to move. The last time we were in this space together, he threw me around and gave me the best orgasms of my life. I was so utterly wrecked that I slept for six hours straight—only to wake and find him gone. I won't admit it, but hearing my dad's cries still wakes me up, and I'm afraid he'll be gone too.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 372

40 – Elara

I settle onto my bed, turning to face him directly. My mind races, haunted by the rollercoaster of emotions he's stirred inside me—how he made me feel incredible one moment, then left me feeling abandoned and worthless the next, slipping away without a single word. I clutch a pillow and rest it on my lap, deliberately making a show of getting comfortable. This is as much ease as he's going to get from me right now.

"So, what's the plan with Eliza, Ember, and Ash?" I ask, trying to sound casual but unable to hide the tension in my voice.

He shrugs, clearly unsure. "No clue yet." Tilting his head thoughtfully, he continues, "Jason's been able to detect some kind of magic near your borders, but he hasn't pinpointed the caster. If they've been working at this for a while, they might be casting from a distance using a magical anchor."

Leaning forward, he hands me his phone. I hesitate, not wanting to take it. "Just look, Elara," he insists, rolling his eyes before dropping the unlocked device into my lap. "Tommy's gathered what he could so far." Without waiting for a response, he heads toward the door.

"Wait—" I start to say, but he cuts me off.

"I'll be right back, princess. You need to eat, and so do I. My hands were full when I first came in." He flashes a half-hearted smile and slips out before I can gather my scattered thoughts to reply.

I stare down at the phone in my lap, feeling a mix of nerves and curiosity. He's left me complete access to everything on it. Why does he have such a hold on me? I'm usually strong, confident around everyone else, but the moment I'm alone with Ben, this uncertain, vulnerable girl surfaces—and I hate it. Still, my curiosity wins. I can't just push the phone aside.

The screen he left open is a group chat with Tommy. It looks like Tommy has been digging up information about the covens nearby, compiling a dossier. Jason is chiming in with questions about magic, asking for training on how to detect it and dismantle the wards that have been set up to harm my pack. That's apparently Tommy's next mission.

I scroll through the messages, amused by their banter even as they work efficiently. I have that kind of camaraderie with Jax and Dev most of the time, but these guys have an entire network of trusted contacts they turn to for answers. It stings a little. My father was a strong Alpha who cared deeply for his pack, but we never had this kind of close-knit family dynamic among our warriors and leaders. I don't know why.

When I finish reading, I do something I never imagined I would—I start exploring his other apps. There aren't many; it's clear he mainly uses the phone for long-distance communication when the mindlink isn't enough. Still, there's a surprisingly detailed list of contacts and an album full of photos.

Ben is meticulous. Every contact is labeled with their name, pack affiliation, and rank. He even jots down notes about who's difficult to work with and who's easier.

My heart pounds as I open the photos app. I want to know the truth, but I'm terrified of what I might find—whether he was with her while he was gone. The first picture tells me all I need to see. It's a wide group shot. She's right in the center, but Ben is nowhere near her. Instead, she's wrapped in the arms of one of the biggest Alphas I've ever seen. The couple stands surrounded by Jeremiah, Rayna, and their men. Ben is off to the side, standing with Luna Beth. The other half of the photo is filled with unfamiliar faces, probably the Alpha's team. Everyone looks genuinely happy, sharing a laugh. Even Ben has a natural, warm smile.

I stare at the photo longer than I should, my mind swirling with questions about what happened between her and Ben. Just then, the man himself returns, flanked by my two closest friends. They barrel toward me, and I half-expect them to tackle me onto the bed. I haven't been easy to deal with lately, and I know they've been giving me space while handling things behind the scenes. Jax pulls me into a tight hug, and Dev steps behind to sandwich me between them.

"You at least smell better than the last time I saw you," Jax jokes into my hair. "Now we know who to call when you're being a stubborn pain." They both laugh, and the vibrations from their chests soothe me more than I expected.

"Eat, get the Beta caught up, and then we'll figure out a plan together. Patrols are on, checking in every hour. We're sleeping tonight—you should too. I'm betting you'll be re-energized and even more of a pain tomorrow now that your boy's back." I scoff as Dev gives Ben a brotherly slap on the chest before they both head out. What the hell?

Ben settles back onto the couch while I sink into my bed again. "I brought some simple food. Melanie told me how she found the poison in your mom's tea. She's checked everything else in the kitchens—nothing else was found. I think you should bring your staff back. You can Alpha command them if needed. I doubt they'll cross you."

He looks at me expectantly. “So, tell me about Jeff, Sebastian, and Richard. What happened while I was gone?”

I hesitate. He sits quietly, waiting patiently. “I’ll tell you about them... when you tell me about her.” My breath catches. He doesn’t owe me anything about his past, and honestly, I’m scared of what I’m about to hear.

“Kennedy was my first everything...” His voice is steady, not filled with sadness or pain, but maybe lost in memories. I stay silent, waiting for him to continue.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 373

41 – Elara

I sit frozen, unable to utter a word. I had hoped that by pretending to eat, he would leave me be, but my hand remains suspended mid-air, sandwich halfway to my mouth. How could I possibly measure up to that? His ideal woman is someone he’s known all his life—a former human who now carries the strength of a wolf and holds the title of Luna over the largest pack I’ve ever heard of. And, as if that weren’t enough, she radiates kindness and goodness so brightly it’s like she’s a fairy godmother walking among us. Fantastic. No pressure at all.

Taking a slow, steadying breath, I lower the rest of my sandwich back onto the plate, pushing it aside. There’s no point in battling a past I never lived through. Since my father’s death and the capture of Jeff, I’ve been simmering with anger just beneath the surface, day after day. Maybe that’s where my story should begin—then, once I’ve shared everything, we can go check on our prisoners. Perhaps Ben will be so focused on my tale that he’ll forget he wanted me to rest.

The rogue and Jeff look far from their best, but our healers have taken a particular interest in keeping them alive—just enough to endure more torture—after discovering their role in my parents’ deaths. It’s strange how even the kindest souls in our pack can harbor a dark side. I’ve learned firsthand that crossing any of them would be a grave mistake.

“Your turn,” Ben says with a chuckle, pulling me out of my spiraling thoughts. Why does his voice send shivers down my spine? I adjust the pillow beneath my head, settling onto my side as I get comfortable. We’d agreed that he’d tell me about Kennedy, the blonde, if I promised to lie down and rest. “And don’t move from there,” he adds firmly.

Though talking about Jeff and the rogues stirs my agitation, I stay put and recount everything I can remember from the past week. So much has happened. Ben pauses now and then, asking questions that I hadn’t thought to ask myself—clarifying details I’d overlooked in my fog of emotions.

“This is exactly why we need him,” my wolf growls softly, her voice growing bolder with each word.

“Enough.” I cut her off. “I’m giving this a chance, but we have to stay focused. The pack is under threat, and he’s here with us. He could still be miles away, with his Alpha, while we suffer here.”

“You are the Alpha now,” my wolf replies sharply. “The elders—or rather, the ‘elder with the stick up his ass’—are struggling with the idea of a female leading. But so far, they’ve been surprisingly helpful and loyal.”

“I know,” I admit. “But I feel like I need to deal with this rogue problem before we even touch on the matebond stuff. I can’t explain it, but I have to do this as myself—as the female Alpha. Hell, as THE Alpha. If I bring him closer now, I’m afraid everyone will start deferring to him and try to edge me out.”

“You know he won’t let that happen.”

“Maybe.”

“Do you realize you make a funny face when you’re arguing with your wolf?”

I bolt upright on the bed. “What?!”

He grins and points to his own face, scrunching his eyebrows and puckering his lips exaggeratedly.

“I don’t make that face!” I protest, tossing my pillow at him and laughing.

“You should do it more often,” he says, not even looking at me as he carefully places the pillow beside him.

I freeze, my voice barely a whisper. “What?”

“Smile.” His gaze holds mine for a moment, the air thick with something unspoken between us. Then, just as quickly, he breaks the moment—grabbing my pillow, tucking it under his head, stretching out on my couch, and closing his eyes. “Now sleep. It’s late.”

I lie there on my side, watching his steady breathing. I have to admit, my nerves don’t feel as frayed with him here. It’s like a fog has lifted from my mind. I’ve been replaying everything in my head all week, trying to piece it together, but nothing clicked. Now, after just a couple of hours with him nearby, my brain finally decides to cooperate. I’m unsure how I feel about it—that uncertainty is unfamiliar to me. I’ve always been so certain, so confident in my decisions. Then he appears, and my body realizes something vital was missing. Now that I know what it feels like to be whole, I can’t imagine going back.

I’ll just lie here, running through my mental lists, letting him drift into a deep sleep before I head to my office to work. It feels good to rest like this, but maybe that’s just because he’s close. Ugh, this matebond nonsense is making me feel like a teenager with a crush—distracted and completely unhelpful.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 374

It must have been at least two hours by now. The darkness outside makes it impossible to gauge the time accurately, but I know I can't stay lying here any longer. Quietly, I slip out from beneath my blankets and tiptoe across the room. Just as I'm reaching for the door handle, a strong arm suddenly wraps around my waist, pulling me back against a solid chest.

"Where do you think you're sneaking off to?" His warm breath brushes against my ear, sending a shiver down my spine.

"I'm not sneaking away," I reply, trying to keep my voice calm. "I didn't want to wake you. I've rested enough. My mind's been racing all night—I have to get to my office." At least my tone sounds steady, even if my heart is pounding.

He chuckles softly behind me. "Well, then, let's go." His grip loosens just enough for me to move.

"Really? You're just going to let me work like this?"

"I'm honestly surprised you lasted this long without getting up," he says with a laugh. He leads me to the door but then pauses, turning toward the room across the hall instead.

"What are you doing?" I try to slip past him toward my office, but his hold tightens around my waist.

"I need to change, and you're not going anywhere without me. There's a clear threat hanging over the Alpha family. You better get used to having a shadow."

"I don't need your protection."

"You do understand why having a Beta is important, right?"

"You're not my Beta."

"The hell I'm not." His low growl makes me shiver again. "Right now, you don't have anyone you can truly trust. The Goddess placed me here for a reason. I'm not going anywhere." He pulls me toward the room opposite mine, which is cluttered with boxes stacked high.

"What's all this?" I run my fingers over the side of one box, noticing the neat, masculine handwriting labeling it as books.

"Alpha James packed up my entire life and shipped it here. He knows I'm your mate. He's been training my brother to take over as Beta at Silver Crescent. I'm here for good. I'm your Beta—nothing more, nothing less. I'm aware of your Elder's opinions about mates and their expectations. I don't want to be an Alpha, but I'm damn good at my job. So as your Beta, you'll have a shadow with you twenty-four-seven until we sort out this rogue and witch problem." He tosses a duffle bag onto the bed and starts rifling through it. "Now, stay put like a good girl and wait for me."

I want to feel annoyed at the teasing tone, but the way his arm brushes mine as he passes sends my thoughts spiraling in a completely different direction.

I settle onto his bed, silently hoping he isn't the type to spend forever in front of the mirror getting ready. To my relief, he's in and out of the shower in under five minutes. But the moment the door swings open, steam billowing out behind him, I lose all focus. Ben steps into the room shirtless, his damp hair slicked back with fingers. Water droplets cling to his chest as if he didn't bother drying off completely—and honestly, I'm not complaining. I never thought I was the kind of girl who noticed a man's chest and abs, but right now? Damn.

"Eyes up here, Alpha," he rumbles with a laugh.

"Shut up." I roll my eyes, trying to look away, but it's far from easy.

"Ready to go? Or do you need something else?" He's teasing me, and I'm not sure if I can handle having him around full-time. I might just explode. I inhale deeply, taking in his strong scent close by.

"It's safe to look," he laughs again, cocky as ever. I feel the urge to both put him in his place and throw myself at him all at once.

But the need for control wins. I spring to my feet. "Let's go talk about Sebastian and Richard, then we can start looking into these witches." There—a full sentence that actually makes sense and sounds decisive. Now, if only I could erase the image of his half-naked form burned into my mind.

I step out of his room, Ben right behind me, his smile practically radiating as he follows closely on my heels.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 375

42 – Elara

"Can you explain something to me? When was I supposed to be told that I was assigned a new Beta without my say?" My voice edges toward irritation, but at least the anger sharpens my focus on him.

"Honestly, I have no clue. I only found out myself when I stopped by Silver Crescent. Alpha James told me he'd sent all my belongings here and that my brother would be taking over my place."

"That doesn't bother you at all? You were basically pushed out and dropped into a pack barely hanging on by a thread." I inhale slowly, holding the breath just long enough to savor the tightness building in my chest. As I exhale and turn around, I find him standing close, arms folded, waiting patiently for me to continue. "You realize this isn't going to be a quick fix or an easy one. Why put yourself through this?"

“First off, I didn’t choose this. We came because a neighbor needed help. My Alpha appointed me as the liaison.”

I roll my eyes and head toward the kitchen, needing something to eat. He’s certainly not making me feel any better about myself. I decide to switch gears. “Tell me about these witches. You gave Jax and Dev some pointers on detecting magic, which is great, but we still haven’t found who’s casting spells. How do we catch them? We need to shut this down fast. I haven’t seen any drug issues since you left, and I don’t think Junior has either. Either they stopped selling—which seems unlikely—or they’ve figured out a new way to slip past us.”

I step into the spacious kitchen, and Melanie immediately jumps back from her spot at the island where she’s prepping something.

I approach and wrap her in a hug. Her arms hang loosely at her sides, hesitant. I can feel the tension in the air around her.

“I’m so sorry. There’s no excuse for how I’ve treated you. Losing my parents and everything else has made me a little unhinged. Can you forgive me?” I whisper into her hair. Behind me, Ben hasn’t made a move, but I know he’s listening.

“Of course, Alpha.” She steps out of my arms, still uncertain but trying to be sincere. “I checked the entire kitchen, and only your mother’s tea was affected, I’m sorry.” She looks down, takes a breath, then meets my eyes again. “But I know who the supplier is. A few people in the pack think all Omegas are stupid.” She rolls her eyes, and I chuckle—this is my house manager showing her true colors. “There’s only one shop that stocks the brand your mother preferred. So the tampering happened either before it got here or during packaging.”

“Do you know where it’s packaged before it reaches the shop?” Ben asks before I can.

“No, Beta, but I can find out if you want. The shopkeeper is a nice woman, but her mate is a terrible man.” That raises my hackles. How did I not know something so basic as where my mother bought her tea? And how did we allow a possibly abusive mate to behave that way?

“Hey, Melanie, we’ve got a few things to take care of today. Can you make sure all our meals get to the Alpha’s office? We’ll let you know if we need to leave so you’re not chasing us down.”

“Of course, Beta.” She smiles at him, and my stomach twists. I don’t like this feeling at all. What the hell is going on with me?

I turn and push him out of the kitchen, and the jerk laughs. I can’t hear it clearly, but I can feel the vibration through his body beneath my hands.

“We need to sort a few things out, then I should probably show you around the pack now that you’re here for good.” I shove him through the office door and walk past him without meeting his gaze. I’m quick-tempered, easily angered even at the best of times. I blame my

red hair gene—and my father—for that. But I've never experienced jealousy before. I hate this feeling.

I shake my head. "Alright, we've got Jeff and his rogue buddy locked up. The warriors have been having their fun torturing them, but we haven't gotten any useful information yet. Richard and Sebastian are on lockdown at home for now. I want to believe they had no clue about Jeff, but there's no way they didn't suspect something. I haven't been able to bring myself to talk to them yet. We need to figure out this magic stuff and find the caster. I know my guys aren't as attuned to it as you and Jason seem to be, but figuring out how they're slipping past us would help. Morale is low; the pack is scared, and I have no idea what the hell I'm doing." I rub my face, keeping my eyes fixed on my desk. I hate sounding weak, feeling weak, and useless. So far, I've only proven my doubters right. I take a deep breath and pace behind my desk, letting my thoughts spiral. That's all they seem capable of doing these days.

"What about your parents?" Ben's deep voice pulls me back again.

"What about them?"

"It's been a week since your dad was attacked. You need to hold a ceremony to send them back to the Goddess, together. It might not 'boost morale,' but it'll give your pack some closure. It's a start."

"How do you stay so calm all the time? It's like nothing ever shakes you."

"You're not the first to ask me that. Honestly, I don't have a good answer. I don't see the point in throwing things, crying, yelling, or pacing around. It feels like wasted energy to me, so I don't do it. Doesn't mean I don't have feelings—I just don't express them the same way most people do."

"I wish I could shut it off like that." That thought almost slipped out loud, but I caught myself.

"It's not an on-off switch. If an outburst will help, I use it. If not, I don't. It's like any other tool or skill. Now, back to your parents." He crosses his broad arms over his chest. "You need to get that organized and done in the next couple of days. Want help?"

"No, it's okay. I can handle it."

"Alright, what about the rogue and Jeff? Want to keep questioning them, or should we just take out the trash?"

"I can do it."

I hear a low rumble from his chest. "The shopkeeper who had your mother's tea..."

"I'll handle it! Damn, you're so bossy!"

He stands, then leans forward on my desk, hands planted firmly. “I’m not bossy. You’re just stubborn. Give me a task, or I’ll take one without your permission. Also, you need to formally induct me into the pack. I’m your Beta now. People need to get used to that.”

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 376

43 – Ben

Now it finally makes sense why Jax and Dev behave the way they do. She never asks for help—that much I already knew—but what’s new is realizing she’s convinced herself that she has to shoulder everything alone. No one else can step in. These guys have completely warped her understanding of what a team is supposed to be. That’s exactly where I’m going to start changing things, and I’m going to drag her along with me whether she likes it or not. But before that, I need to officially become part of this pack. I’m tired of lugging around a phone when I could simply mindlink with everyone.

“What about Richard?” she challenges, her voice stubborn but betraying a flicker of doubt.

“What about him?” I snap back. “He couldn’t protect your father when it mattered most. I’m still not convinced he isn’t part of the problem.”

“And Sebastian?” she presses.

“If he didn’t see this coming, he’s a complete idiot. He’s supposed to be the Delta, but my guys have done more to safeguard your pack than he ever has. So yeah, he’s part of the problem too. Either your leadership got lazy and comfortable, forgetting the meaning of working for the pack, or something else is off. Either way, things are going to change. Get me inducted so we can move forward.”

She shoots me a look. “You really just give up your own pack that easily? How do I know you won’t turn on me the moment it suits you?”

“The Moon Goddess knows I won’t.” I say firmly. “And I’m not ‘giving up’ my pack. Those guys are my brothers, and they’d drop everything to help me. Alpha James would come running if I called. My brother and dad too. This is where I’m supposed to be. You’re the only one resisting it. So, do you want an elder’s help or can you handle this yourself?”

She mutters something as she walks past me, and I’m pretty sure I caught the word ‘asshole’ again. At this rate, that’s going to become my new name instead of Ben. But she does retrieve the ceremonial knife from behind a thick glass display case, and a sudden thought hits me: what if she’s planning to use it on me? This whole ritualistic stuff her pack does feels so pompous sometimes. Her father never came across as arrogant, but judging by what I’m seeing, their ancestors definitely were. That’s why some of the leadership’s actions confuse me. If they care so much about image and prosperity, why aren’t they more focused on training, protecting, and growing the pack? Something’s definitely wrong. It’s up to me to figure out what.

I've witnessed many inductions before. People switch packs for all sorts of reasons—usually for a mate, but sometimes to fill key roles. Healers, historians, trainers, even teachers are often shared between neighboring packs, and if the fit is right, the wolf becomes a permanent member. I never imagined I'd leave the pack I grew up in. It's a bittersweet feeling. This doesn't feel forced or wrong, but it's far from comfortable either. As old-fashioned as it sounds, in mate situations, it's usually the female who moves to the male's pack. My case isn't unheard of, just less common. I'm giving up the ability to mindlink with Tommy and Jason, something Jer and Rayna can manage because they're Alpha and Luna. I take a deep breath and shove those feelings down—I can't afford to be sentimental right now. My priority is figuring out who's trying to kill Elara and why they've been targeting her pack for so long. Why haven't they just attacked outright and taken over? Why didn't the rogues or witches show themselves after her parents were killed? Too many things don't add up from a tactical perspective.

"Alright, Beta, give me your hand," Elara says, pulling me from my swirling thoughts. Her palm is extended, already cut with a small, precise line at the base, blood pooling near her wrist.

Her hands are smaller than mine, but those long, slender fingers are deceptive. She's strong and muscular beneath her soft curves. She doesn't carry herself like a hardened warrior ready to kill at a moment's notice, but I've seen her fight firsthand. She's a machine—focused, relentless, and deadly when she locks onto a target.

I hesitate for just a moment, knowing exactly what's coming. Ready or not, the tingling sensation, the pull of the mate bond—it's all about to intensify as we connect with another thread. I place my palm up in hers. She's steady, but beneath the surface, I sense her nervousness mingling with the electric current spreading from her hand to mine. Her gaze is fixed on my hand, eyes cast downward, and I can't quite read her full expression. Her focus is on the knife, barely touching my skin, poised to seal this new bond between us.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 377

"Do you vow to protect the Black Claw pack with your very life?"

"I do." She presses the tip of the knife gently against my palm, and I bite back a sharp intake of breath as the cool silver blade pierces my skin.

"Will you place the safety of every member of the Black Claw pack above your own?"

"I do." Slowly, almost hesitantly, she drags the knife's edge down my hand, leaving a thin line of blood in its wake.

"And do you promise to put the life of the Alpha of Black Claw before your own?"

Her gaze remains fixed elsewhere, refusing to meet mine. "I do."

“Do you swear your unwavering loyalty to the Black Claw pack...” She inhales deeply, then exhales with deliberate calm, “...and to me, as your Alpha?”

This time, I don't respond right away. I want her to see the sincerity in my eyes, not just hear the words I say. When she finally meets my gaze, I catch the flicker of pain and doubt there. She thinks I'm hesitating, second-guessing. But this—this pledge—is one of the few things I am absolutely certain about, especially considering where my mind was a month ago.

Gently, I turn my hand over in hers, letting our blood mingle. I sense her instinct to pull away, but I hold firm.

“I swear my loyalty to Alpha Elara Carman and the Black Claw pack as their new Beta. I will dedicate myself to protecting every member to the fullest extent of my ability.” A surge of energy pulses from where our hands connect, flowing through me and radiating outward—no doubt reaching the rest of the pack. They all know now. The new order has begun, and I am part of it.

We need to find Richard next. He should be alright, but I want to be certain he harbors no resentment, and that he isn't spiraling into panic if he's somehow involved with the rogue situation.

“F*CK YEAH!” Jax's voice blasts into my mind, making me wince. “About time! You two are the absolute worst at this whole mate thing.”

“Are you done?” I ask, already dreading his relentless commentary.

“Not even close. You might regret the fact that we have constant access to your thoughts now,” Jax chuckles.

“You'll have to excuse him,” Dev interjects. “He's not exactly the most socially skilled. Friendless, really.” I roll my eyes at that.

“What?” Elara tries again to pull her hand free, but I'm not ready to let go just yet.

“Jax and Dev are always the first to say hello,” I say, tapping my temple with my free hand. She responds with a matching eye-roll. “Richard is our first stop. We've got a long day ahead, and I want to check in with the former Beta and the Delta. I need to figure out if we should be recruiting another team member.”

“Aren't you a bit presumptuous?” she teases.

“No, just practical and efficient. You need a reliable team. My gut says Jax and Dev should share the Delta title, but if Sebastian isn't a problem, they should be promoted to lead warriors. The three of them can handle training duties together. You need more fighters on your side—it keeps the pups and teens occupied, making them less vulnerable. Your focus should be on the rogues and witches; their focus should be on the pack members. You can't do this alone. That was probably your father's biggest mistake.”

She gives me a look, skeptical.

“Don’t stare at me like that,” I continue. “He was cautious—maybe too cautious. Instead of confronting the problem head-on, he kept everything close to the chest, and that secrecy got him killed. He might have had answers to questions we’re still asking, but he didn’t want you to inherit his mess. Now, that’s exactly what you’re doing—and it ends here. Now.”

I finally let her hand slip from mine and step forward, leading the way out the door. I may be her Beta, but I am also her mate. Inside this home, we stand as equals. Outside, she is the leader, and I can make it look seamless—but she’ll always know I’m standing beside her, never behind.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 378

44-Ben

Convincing her to let me take the wheel is always a struggle. Having spent months coming and going, I’m familiar with the pack’s layout—I don’t need to learn the roads or directions anymore. Still, I like to understand how she moves from place to place. As her Beta, anticipating her sudden impulses is part of my job, and knowing her usual routes helps me do that. When she leaves, especially if her mind is elsewhere or she’s upset, I need to predict where she might go first. I’ve spent a lifetime figuring out Jeremiah; now it’s time to focus fully on Elara. So, she gives me the directions, and I keep quiet, concentrating on the road.

Up until now, we’ve mostly gone our separate ways, checking in by text or through another warrior. It’s been a long time since we’ve done anything together inside her pack. The only times we’ve teamed up were for border patrols or visits to Junior’s pack.

“There’s his house,” she says, pointing toward a small bungalow. It’s nothing like I expected given the packhouse’s design. The house is modest—small, painted white, with plain shutters on the windows. The lawn is neatly trimmed but entirely impersonal.

From where I’m sitting, I spot Richard on the front porch, looking utterly bored. I can understand that feeling. She probably did the worst thing possible to him—maybe without even meaning to. She didn’t lock him away, but she stripped him of his purpose and confined him to a place that should feel safe but instead acts as a cage. He’s surrounded by warriors ordered to kill him if he steps off that porch, branded a traitor.

I put the truck in park and quickly step out, positioning myself between her and Richard. She mentioned she hasn’t spoken to him since they caught Jeff, so I have no idea how this meeting will unfold.

Richard rises to his full height. I’m only eighteen, but we share the same build, made for the same kind of work. He doesn’t intimidate me; he irritates me. Like Elara, I want answers.

As we close the distance, he grabs the front of my shirt and yanks me so that my back slams against the side of his house. I hear Elara shout his name and release her aura, but we both ignore her. This confrontation needs to happen.

“You think you can just step in and take my place, pup?” he snarls, leaning in close to my ear.

“Someone had to do it. You were screwing up left and right,” I shoot back, feeling his grip tighten as his fist slides closer to my throat.

“Who says you’re better than me? You don’t know half of what’s going on here.”

“The Moon Goddess obviously thought your methods weren’t working. Why did you let your Alpha get attacked? Why was your Luna in danger from her Gamma? You should have been on top of that, Dick.”

He switches to mind link. “You can only help an Alpha who wants to be helped.” His gaze flickers over his shoulder for a moment before returning to me. “I loved Rick like a brother, but he got complacent. Thought we were too small to cause trouble. He believed training his daughter to be Alpha would be easy. She’s alive because of Sebastian and me. Rick didn’t even know half of it. He wouldn’t listen. And she definitely doesn’t know. She doesn’t need anything else messing with her head. Are you ready for that kind of chaos?”

“Is any Beta ever ready?” I retort.

He lets out a bitter laugh. “I won’t say more now, but you need to explain what happened at the hospital. Are you on her side or not?” I ask.

Still gripping my shirt, he opens his mouth to speak aloud so we both can hear. We’re testing each other. “I was with your parents that day, doing rounds. I suspected Jeff was shady, but I also know he’s a misogynistic asshole. He hated being a Gamma, hated protecting a female. But he did just enough so Rick wouldn’t replace him.” He glances down at his fist. “Can you behave so we can talk like adults?”

“Can you?” I challenge, aware that he’s more than twice my age and has the experience to back it up. But I refuse to be treated like a child. “Give us the facts, and the Alpha will decide if she believes you—and what your fate will be after this.”

“You’re going to let her decide alone? Not together?” he growls, tilting his head.

“I’m just the Beta. I’ll offer my opinion when I have one. The Alpha has the final say,” I reply without breaking eye contact. I can see him searching for something. After a long moment, he finally lets go and turns his back, heading toward the outdoor furniture on the porch. We follow, and I keep myself between them. If he’s lying or working with Jeff or whoever else is behind the Black Claw attacks, I know Elara can defend herself—but anyone who wants to hurt her will have to get through me first.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 379

Elara's voice trembled slightly as she asked, "If you knew he hated the Luna, then why did you leave him alone with them?" Though she tried to sound strong, the sorrow underlying her words was unmistakable.

I sighed, feeling the weight of the question. "Because that's exactly what we'd been doing for weeks. We organized patrols around the pack hospital, and Jeff was always part of those plans. Rick was almost always by her side. If he ever had to step away—even just to use the bathroom—he'd leave Jeff and me to watch over her. There's a difference between hating someone and wanting them dead. We never suspected he'd go that far." I paused, the memory stinging. "Rick and I were planning to hand over the pack to you once the Luna woke up. We had no reason to force a new team on you. He wanted you to have the freedom to choose who you wanted around you. Maybe he should have done it sooner. I don't know if it would have changed anything, but I believe they'd both still be alive if he had." My voice carried a hint of bitterness—an almost blaming tone that I quickly swallowed. Rick and Emilia were gone now, and I refused to let anyone cast blame on them.

Elara's eyes searched mine. "Do you know anything more about the rogues? The attacks? The drugs? Any of the things we've been trying to figure out for months?" She didn't mention the magic angle, and neither did I. I wasn't sure if Rick or Elara had spoken about that discovery, and Elara didn't correct me.

He nodded slowly. "The attacks were strategic. They wanted to see who would respond. They didn't expect Rick to bring in help from Silver Crescent, but too many incidents required a stronger response."

I frowned. "What do you mean? We only had two attacks before Dad called in Alpha James."

Elara leaned forward in her chair, and I mirrored her, shifting my left leg so it rested just in front of her right knee—a silent gesture of solidarity, both to her and to him.

"There were nearly a dozen similar cases over the past five years," he explained quietly. "Your father didn't want to worry you. As much as he wanted you to be the next Alpha, you were still his little girl to protect. That contradiction was his undoing. So many things could be different if he had given you more insight." I heard the chair creak beside me as Elara gripped the armrest tightly, white-knuckled. "The attack that brought Jeremiah, Ben, and their team here was a clear warning—to stop searching, to stop interfering. Before that, only one other kid was found, probably a new mule recruit who messed up. But the girl... she was different. She was your size, your weight, with red hair. They hung her between trees by her arms and legs, left to bleed out. I won't go into the other horrors we uncovered about what was done to her here. Let's just say, I like my furniture in one piece, but you get the picture."

My heart pounded. "Elara was the next target?" I struggled to keep my voice steady, my mind racing. My foot brushed against hers without thinking—my wolf's way of checking she was still right beside me. We couldn't afford to cause a scene or make her feel trapped. I felt

the familiar tingling beneath my shoes, and the restless energy within me settled immediately.

“That’s what we believe,” he confirmed. “Guys like Jeff don’t see women as equals in fighting or protection. They thought she’d be easy to capture, to use as bait or leverage against Rick if they got her alone. Thank the Goddess you never went anywhere without Jaxon, Devon, or this one.” He gestured toward me. “And before you get defensive, remember I taught you how to fight. I know your skill set. They wouldn’t have stood a chance unless they caught you alone against five or six of them—and they would have fought dirty. They’d have used every weapon, every drug at their disposal to take you down.”

I felt a surge of anger. “Why didn’t you do more to stop it? Why didn’t you tell her what was happening so she could protect herself? That’s your job as Beta.”

He shook his head. “You forget, kid, I wasn’t her Beta—I was Rick’s. Rick, as Alpha, ordered me to keep quiet. I did my best to keep Jeff away from her. I did my job as well as I could.”

Elara’s voice softened. “What about the listening devices we found everywhere?”

He frowned. “I never saw Jeff put them there. I can’t explain that. We all had our roles. I couldn’t tail Jeff and protect your parents at the same time.”

“And Sebastian?” I asked. “Where does he fit into all this?”

“He was as lost as you,” he said. “Jeff might act like a fool, but he’s smart and good at not getting caught. Sebastian was the one processing all the attacks, following leads. I’m sure Jeff sent him on more wild goose chases than you kids ever did.” He glanced to his right, and we both turned to see Sebastian standing at the edge of his porch, arms crossed, watching us expectantly. “Can he come over? Or do you want to keep forcing him to eavesdrop?”

Elara exhaled sharply, and I glanced sideways at her, waiting to see what she’d decide. I wasn’t going to offer my opinion here—this was deeply personal for all three of them.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 380

45 – Elara

“Come on over, Sebastian.” I raise my voice deliberately, making sure it carries across the yard where the other warriors are stationed. Ever since the attack on my father, no one wants to take any risks with his former team. They’re supposed to be helping us deal with this growing drug crisis, but instead, they’re more focused on watching their own backs.

Sebastian moves cautiously across the yard, his steps measured and wary. Honestly, I can’t blame him—if I were in his shoes, I’d be just as careful, wondering if this was some

kind of trap. But instead of approaching the porch steps, which would put him behind Ben and me, he stops within our line of sight and leaps over the railing, settling into the chair tucked in the corner. It's the most isolated spot he could have chosen. Both he and Ben seem to be trying to reassure me that they're not a threat, but I can't shake the feeling that this might be a false sense of security—like the one my father had before everything fell apart.

Without waiting for me to prompt him, Sebastian begins, "I'm not going to blame a dead man. We all share the responsibility for not seeing Jeff for who he really was. But you have to understand, we're a team, and unity is essential. Trust in a fight—that's what keeps us alive. I never liked Jeff personally. I thought he was a lousy teammate, more lazy and careless than a traitor, but he was still the man fighting beside me. That counts for something." He exhales slowly, as if releasing a weight he's been carrying. "About these attacks, I've gathered some intel, but it's mostly scattered and random. Nothing seems connected on the surface. I'm sure you and Ben have more pieces to this puzzle that could help. I'll share everything I have and do whatever I can to assist. I want these people stopped just as much as you do. I want to understand how victims are left behind, with scent trails leading away in every direction, only to vanish after twenty feet. I want to know why I can't pick up the scent of anyone crossing the pack. Even if the wolf's scent is masked, the drugs should leave some kind of trail. I want to know how I can be tracking someone, have them in my sights, and then watch them disappear into thin air. And I want to know if my mate and pup will be safe under your protection if something happens to me—or if the pack will turn against them." His gaze locks with mine, and for the first time, I see not just a warrior, but the protector of our pack looking directly at me. It's not a challenge—it's an honest confession of the fears and doubts he's been carrying while trapped here.

"I have no intention of harming innocent people," he adds quietly.

"That's not an answer, Alpha. You know it isn't."

"I don't know who to trust anymore," he admits, voice tight with frustration. "I've been around all of you my whole life, learned from you, watched you with my father—and he still ended up dead at the hands of someone who was supposed to protect him. Forgive me if I don't just fall back into old patterns."

"That's exactly what this group wants from you, Elara," Richard's voice cuts in, calm but firm. I feel Ben shift beside me, tense. Richard's words echo something Ben said when he arrived.

"Well, everything they want is already happening," I say bitterly. "My pack doesn't trust me. The team that should be protecting me had a traitor in its ranks. And kids are still turning up drugged or dead. I've barely started, and I'm already failing."

"No, kiddo," Richard replies gently. "You inherited a broken system. That's what they want—to watch you crumble so it's easier to take everything from you. They think you're weak." He raises his hands in a placating gesture, anticipating the fight brewing in the air. "Whether it's because you're female, like Jeff thought, or because you're young and easier to control, we don't know. But I think you should keep your Beta close at all times. It's clear you trust him

for more than just being your mate. And close your mouth—your matebond is obvious, and neither of you have a clue how to hide it.”

I glance at Ben, who’s already trying to suppress a smile, and for a moment, the tension eases just a little. The weight of everything pressing down on us feels a bit lighter, but the fight is far from over.