

Letters Sent To Eternity

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 381

Sebastian chuckled, a sharp sound breaking the tense air. “For a while, I honestly thought they were managing alright. But what I really wanted was to see Jeff’s expression the moment you sent him back to the Goddess. After everything he’s done, and while we’re all suffering here, he got off way too easy.”

I cut in, my voice steady but carrying a hint of satisfaction. Both men turned to me, puzzled. “Actually, you’re lucky in that regard. Jeff’s still locked up in the cells. The healers took his crime personally—killing my mother right under their watchful eyes. They’ve been assisting me, using their own unique skills to extract information from him.”

Sebastian leaned forward, eyes sharp with interest. “Wait, you still have him alive? Has he told you anything useful?”

I shook my head slowly. “Nothing that helps us much. But strangely, this process seems to give the healers a sense of peace, a new purpose in all this chaos.” I shrugged, trying to downplay the complexity. “We also caught another rogue working alongside him. He was spotted darting through Junior’s pack, abandoning his team and everything else just to escape.”

Ben finally spoke, breaking the silence that had settled over us since we’d sat down. “You’ve been focusing on tracking wolves and following scents. What about the magic involved? Have you considered that angle?”

“We suspected magic, of course,” I replied. “It’s the only logical explanation for how they’re pulling this off. But so far, we haven’t uncovered anything beyond that.”

“Have you tried working with casters to trace the magic’s source or identify the spells being used?” Ben asked, his tone serious.

“No,” I admitted. “None of us have contacts willing to collaborate.”

Ben’s lips curved into a slight smile. “Well, you’re in luck. I know a few. The challenge is getting them to meet with us—and then to open up. Alpha James has some theories and reached out to his own network. There are witches willing to talk, but they come with conditions.”

Sebastian leaned in eagerly. “What kind of conditions?”

Ben's gaze was steady. "Honestly, it's the same thing the ones drugging us want. They're after our protection, our assistance. They'd prefer to work together peacefully."

Richard's frustration bubbled over. "What exactly does that mean, boy?" His voice was sharp, impatience clear. I noticed Ben's deliberate vagueness, probably because he hadn't shared all the details with me yet. But I wouldn't let them see that. Ben's a strategist—always thinking several moves ahead. He's still searching for a solution, and my wolf and I trust his judgment completely.

"Bring them here," Ben said calmly.

I froze for a moment, my expression unreadable. There had to be more to it.

Richard jumped up, pacing angrily across the porch, muttering under his breath. Sebastian rolled his eyes and leaned back in his chair. "Why would you bring casters here, to our pack, when they're part of the problem? Why help the very people you suspect of drugging our children, holding them hostage, or worse?" Richard's words were sharp, his anger palpable.

Ben remained composed, clearly anticipating this reaction. "It's simple. Sit down, and I'll explain." His tone was firm but patient. If Richard had shouted at me like that, I know my temper would have flared instantly. "You, Sebastian, Rick, and Jeff have been handling this your way for years—probably decades—and it's gotten you nowhere. Rick wasn't interested in expanding or improving the pack; he wanted to maintain the status quo. His plan was to work with familiar faces, avoid anything new, live out his retirement, and then pass the pack along. He was a good Alpha, but it wasn't his passion—more of an obligation, if I had to guess based on how he acted while I knew him."

Ben's gaze shifted between them, unflinching. "If any of you truly wanted to fix this situation, and suspected witchcraft was involved, one or more of you should have reached out to casters you know—or at least to people who know casters. Building relationships with other packs, human cities, covens, vampire broods, and fae tribes nearby would have made sense. Gathering all the information possible about the casters working against you should have been a priority. But none of you did that. Instead, you let Jeff roam free, trying to destroy what you claim to care about."

He folded his hands calmly in his lap, but I could feel the quiet strength radiating from him as he called out my father's closest friends for their complacency. I was still absorbing the weight of his words when I realized the attention had shifted back to me.

"My suggestion, Alpha," Ben continued, "is that we make contact with the faction of the coven seeking protection from Ember and Ash. If we offer them a place within the pack..."

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 382

"You're seriously considering handing over territory to a group of witches who could betray you at any moment?" Richard sneered, disbelief clear in his voice.

Ben didn't avert his gaze from me as he replied calmly, "Is it really any different from a Gamma poisoning his Luna?" He paused, then continued, "I never said we'd give them land outright. I'm talking about inviting them here, bringing them onto our soil. Offering them protection in exchange for their aid. The kitchen witches and elemental witches could be invaluable allies, and this would allow them to step out of the shadows. Like I mentioned before—cohabitation." His eyes locked onto mine, silently waiting for my response. He had a plan, but by presenting it in front of everyone, he was showing he was willing to wait for my approval. It was a calculated move, meant to prove a point.

He had a valid argument. Forming alliances with different species, humans included, could be a strategic advantage. If their help could benefit the shopkeepers and the entire pack, why wouldn't I consider it? At the same time, I understood Richard's skepticism. If witches were the source of our troubles, why extend trust to them? Perhaps that was exactly why Ben brought this up here—so I could hear multiple perspectives and make an unbiased decision. I caught the way he referred to the land as "our" land, and a flutter stirred in my chest, a subtle but unmistakable feeling of belonging.

"Let's reach out to Alpha James, make contact, and start from there," I said, feeling the weight of the decision settle on my shoulders.

An exasperated sigh broke the silence. "What, Richard? He's right. We've had plenty of time to get to the bottom of this, haven't we? Hell, I've had time—and none of us have made progress. The only thing that's changed is that a dozen of our kids are dead, and my parents are both gone. Something has to shift."

Sebastian, sitting quietly in his corner, finally spoke up. "What about Jeff?"

I glanced at him. "What about him?"

"I want a shot at him. I know we still have to prove our loyalty, and we're far from being off the hook because of him, but he put my family in danger. I'm stuck at home, unable to do my job because of that selfish asshole."

"I'll have Jax and Dev take you," I said firmly, rising to my feet. "Just don't kill him. Not yet, anyway." Now was the moment to move forward; I didn't expect talking to these witches to be easy, but we had to try.

Ben trailed silently behind me as we headed to the truck. Without waiting for an invitation, I slid into the passenger seat. He preferred driving, and I didn't mind. I waited quietly for him to break the silence. He liked to mull things over before speaking, while I tended to throw out ideas as they came. I was curious to see where he would take us next.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 383

46 – Elara

We drove northwest, the car filled with a comfortable silence that stretched between us. After about twenty minutes, he still hadn't uttered a word, but I noticed a subtle shift in his demeanor—he seemed more at ease the further we distanced ourselves from Richard and Sebastian.

Breaking the quiet, I glanced over and asked, "Are you going to tell me what we're doing, or should I start worrying that you're taking me somewhere deep in the woods without a clue?" My eyes narrowed in suspicion, waiting for some kind of explanation.

He exhaled sharply, frustration evident in his voice. "I got a message from Tommy and Alpha James. We have a meeting."

"Was there any chance you were going to fill me in? Give me a heads-up? Or did you want me to walk in blind and look like a complete fool?" I leaned my elbow against the window, resting my chin on my hand, clearly annoyed.

He shrugged, avoiding eye contact. "I wasn't sure you'd go along with it."

"Well... I'm sitting right here with you in this car. Doesn't that say something about the trust I have in you? Maybe you could show me the same respect." My frustration bubbled over as I crossed my arms and turned my gaze back to the road ahead. I thought we had reached some form of understanding. He was here now, part of my pack. I'd taken a huge risk trusting him, and while he was one of the few people I leaned on, there was still so much left to build between us. I had hoped this situation was common ground.

He finally spoke again, his voice low and serious. "Her name is Briana. She's a Nature Witch and the leader of the Verdant Coven. She's just as determined as we are to either eliminate or contain the Ember and Ash Coven. Whether she wants to help us or simply protect her own kind, I don't know. That's all I have."

"So, let me get this straight," I scoffed without looking at him. "We're supposed to meet a witch, with zero backup, who might not even be on our side?"

"Who said I didn't bring backup?" His tone dropped to a low growl, and despite my irritation, I felt a familiar shiver run through me.

"You never told me what the plan was beyond the two of us meeting some coven leader," I countered.

"Do you honestly think I'd throw you into some unknown situation without a plan? With everything going on, I thought you knew me better than that. How many times have we gone scouting, patrolling, or exploring caves without a team?" His words hit home. He was right—he always planned for the worst. Like an old man preparing for every possible disaster before leaving the packhouse.

Still, I was tired of assuming people were doing their jobs properly.

"So, who's with us?" I barely managed to ask before my phone buzzed, interrupting my thoughts.

“Hello, bosslady. Bossman said you’re giving him a hard time,” Jax’s voice crackled through the link, full of teasing laughter. Seriously? Were they having secret conversations about me?

“Will you cut the guy some slack?” Dev chimed in, as if I’d been arguing with them instead of Ben.

“What did he tell you about this mission?” I demanded. If they knew more than I did, Ben was definitely sleeping out on my balcony tonight—silver cuffs included, to keep him from shifting.

“Some witch leader who’s into nature magic wants to talk about our witch problem,” Jax replied, sounding indifferent. “That’s all we know.”

“And you’re both okay with jumping into the unknown with your new Beta without checking in with me first?”

“You two are inseparable when he’s around. It’s safe to assume if he’s going somewhere, so are you. So tone down the third-degree interrogation, bosslady. We knew you were coming and figured you knew the plan. Now let’s go get some answers.” I could hear his breathing quicken before the link cut off. They must be patrolling near our truck.

It was impossible to stay mad at them. This was exactly what I would have done. I just hated being left out of the loop.

“Why didn’t you tell me we were doing this?” I turned fully toward Ben, my voice firm. This was my pack. I wasn’t about to be kept in the dark about anything. It was part of why we were in this mess to begin with.

“Honestly?” He gave me a sidelong glance.

“Yeah, that’s pretty much the question.”

“I wasn’t sure how your meeting with Richard and Sebastian would go.” He slowed the car as we neared a clearing.

“Explain...” I urged.

He shifted into park, took a deep breath, and faced me. “It could have gone so many ways. They might have lied to us. You might not have had the nerve to Alpha command them, considering they were your father’s former team. The most likely scenario, I thought, was that you’d unleash all the anger you’re still holding onto from your parents on Richard. I also figured you might go after Jeff again. We need answers, but I wouldn’t have stopped you either.” He stepped out of the car at that, leaving me stunned. What the hell? That wasn’t an answer—it was more like a warning.

“Ben, wait.” I grabbed his shoulder, spinning him back toward me. “Why didn’t you tell me?”

“I made a judgment call. I planned for both possibilities—bringing you in or letting you grieve however you needed. Telling you upfront would have influenced how you reacted today. You know now, and she’s here somewhere. Let’s go.” He nudged my shoulder with his own before turning away.

I scanned the dense forest surrounding us. “How do you know she’s here?”

“Have you not been on patrols with the guys lately?”

“I have, but I’ve been busy. You know, traitors in my pack and all.” I smirked as we carefully pushed through thick brush. There were no visible trails, which meant this spot was rarely, if ever, visited. There was something calming about a piece of forest left untouched. Sure, we tried to stick to our paths and disturb as little as possible, but this was something different—almost sacred.

“You feel it.” Ben’s voice pulled me from my thoughts. I turned to see him watching me closely, and I stumbled slightly. As usual, he caught me before I could fall flat on my face. I swear, I’m only clumsy around him. Probably why I felt the need to remind him, “I’m the Alpha.”

“Huh.”

“I can see it on your face—you sense the magic around us. She must have some kind of barrier up. I’m still learning, and Tommy’s researching too, but I can smell it. The air has this clean ozone scent and a faint metallic taste.”

Closing my eyes, I focused. Almost instantly, the sensation hit me—the scent, the taste, the calm that settled over the clearing. Fascinating. “Is that all magic, or just hers?” The longer we stood there, the more curious I became.

“It’s a side effect of Nature Magic.” A soft, melodic voice floated through the trees, silky and soothing. I could have listened to it forever. That kind of power was dangerously captivating.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 384

47 – Ben

I wish I had more clarity, more concrete answers to hold onto, but all I get is this disembodied voice that only deepens the mystery. If I were the kind to gamble, I’d bet that the witch lurking somewhere nearby is eavesdropping and enjoying our confusion. But I’m not one to take risks without a sure win.

I notice Elara tense beside me as the phantom voice speaks again. Without hesitation, I slide my arm around her waist—not to confine her or make her feel trapped, but because the unknown surrounding us makes me crave her presence. Holding her close feels like a shield against the uncertainty pressing in on us.

Gently drawing her back against my chest, I call out, "Briana? My name is Ben. Alpha James sent me here. He said you might be able to help us with the drug problem plaguing our pack."

The heavy silence that follows is almost suffocating. I sense Jax and Dev shifting on either side of me, ready for whatever might come next. They're sharp, quick to read the tension in the air. Despite being told Briana is friendly, I'm not about to let my guard down and get caught off guard like a rookie.

"If you tell your guards to stand down, I will lower my wards," the voice offers again, though I can't pinpoint its origin.

Elara's voice is steady but firm. "Why don't you keep your wards up, but show yourself? No offense, but we're done with magic being used against us in the dark. I want to see who I'm dealing with before I lower my defenses."

Throughout, she stays connected to me, her eyes flashing a mix of impatience and determination. I know she's not in the mood for games—and honestly, I can't blame her irritation on anyone but myself.

Usually, when Elara asserts herself or takes command, she steps away to claim her space. But right now, with her pressed close, I feel stronger, more alert. Maybe she feels it too.

"I have not harmed your pups, nor do I intend to," the voice replies, "but I do hold some of the answers you seek."

"That's a good start," Elara responds, her patience thinning. "But I'd prefer to speak to a face, if you don't mind." I can sense her frustration growing through our bond—if this witch keeps toying with us, I'm afraid Elara might just walk away.

"As you wish, Alpha," the voice concedes.

"Well, at least she got the title right," I mutter under my breath, scanning every direction. The voice seems to come from everywhere at once, as if the very trees around us are speaking.

"You're not far off, Ben," the voice says crisply to my left. Suddenly, I notice a shimmer before the largest tree in the clearing. A tall, slender woman steps out, her form blending seamlessly from the rough bark.

Her face is young, but carries the weight of deep knowledge. Chocolate brown hair flows down her back, nearly grazing her knees. I wonder if witches age like werewolves or fae—slowly, almost timelessly. Briana looks to be in her late twenties, yet something about her suggests she's lived far longer than that.

"Elara's right again," I think, surprised to realize Briana is responding to my thoughts.

"So, you have telepathy too?" I ask aloud.

“No, but the forest senses the energy your thoughts emit. You’re as curious as your Alpha is hot-tempered. You don’t blurt out the first thing that crosses your mind. Your Alpha questions my motives. You don’t trust easily, child,” Briana says, shifting her attention from me to Elara, who remains coiled and ready.

“Are you going to tell us something useful, or just stand there analyzing our auras all day?” Elara snaps.

Briana smiles softly, stepping in front of us. The forest seems to ripple around her, each blade of grass reaching out as she moves past.

“You’ve been caught in the middle of a dangerous game,” Briana begins.

“Our teens and pups dying from overdoses isn’t a game,” Elara interrupts sharply.

“High Priestess,” Briana corrects gently.

“Excuse me?” Elara’s head snaps back, her tone sharp.

“I used your title because it is yours. I am the High Priestess of the Verdant Coven,” Briana explains calmly.

“Do you know who’s behind the harm coming to Black Claw’s pups?” I ask, eager for answers.

“I believe I do. Magic has its own ‘flavor.’ Each witch leaves a unique signature when casting a spell. It’s difficult to hide or disguise, even for me.”

“So, who exactly are we hunting? And how do we stop her? My pack isn’t a playground for some rogue caster’s agenda.”

“She was once part of my coven,” Briana reveals. “Until someone convinced her she should lead. When I refused to step aside, she left with a group of witches and warlocks loyal to her. Now, she’s trying to overthrow me by force.”

“By controlling my pack’s minds to take you down?” I ask, incredulous.

“Something like that,” Briana confirms.

“How do you know all this?” I press. “That’s a lot of specific information. Why didn’t you come to us sooner?”

“I didn’t realize Black Claw was the target until I spoke with Alpha James. As for knowing who she is—she left with a clear threat and since then, several of my coven members have been found dead or gone missing. I suspect she’s turning them against me.”

“Why not strike first and deal with her yourself?” Jax steps forward, his strategist’s mind racing. “Why wait for the worst to happen when you know it’s coming?”

“This is something you’ll have to understand about witches,” Briana answers quietly. “I am a Green Witch. I work with the earth, feeling its pulse. I don’t seek conflict. Like your pack, leadership and power are passed down the matron’s bloodline. But unlike you, we can choose to accept or pass on the mantle. Not everyone is meant to lead or care for the coven. I choose peace and negotiation. I will fight if I must, but I strive to avoid it. It’s simply who I am.”

“Alpha James mentioned you want to relocate your coven to Black Claw’s lands. Why?” Dev’s voice breaks in, her tone probing but calm.

She continues, “You’re giving us answers, but they don’t feel complete. We need to talk about what this means for us and your coven.”

“Like I said, my members are disappearing at an alarming rate. Even with wards and protections, I can’t keep them all safe. But with your pack’s physical strength and our magical wards combined, I believe we can protect what matters most—together.”

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 385

48 – Ben

“If we decide to join forces, what exactly does that mean for you?” I asked cautiously. “No offense, High Priestess, but I’m not about to hand over the little pack territory we have to someone we haven’t properly vetted.”

Elara’s gaze was steady as Briana replied, “We have no intention of taking what doesn’t belong to us or settling here permanently. Regarding accommodations, we have the resources to invest in building properties, which you could use later for new pack members. Think of it as a kind of down payment. Until then, we are perfectly willing to camp temporarily in the forest.”

I raised an eyebrow. “How many coven members will you be bringing with you?”

“There are thirty of us remaining,” Briana answered calmly. “And given the current circumstances, we are not looking to increase that number.”

Elara’s expression tightened slightly when Briana mentioned, “We believe there may be wards or spells placed within the pack that are being used against us. Can you help remove them?”

Briana’s reply was measured. “That’s a complicated question.” I felt Elara stiffen in my arms as Briana continued. “I won’t pretend that my magic can undo every other form of magic. It doesn’t work that way, and anyone who believes otherwise is bound to be deceived. Magic has its checks and balances; no single type of caster is all-powerful. What we can do is detect these spells, understand their purpose, and in many cases, help you counteract them if complete removal isn’t possible.”

Elara looked at me, her eyes searching. I realized this was the first time she'd asked for my opinion, apart from Jax and Dev.

"I don't see any other viable option," I said thoughtfully. "If she's willing to invest in building property and then leave it for you to use as you see fit, that's a start. Plus, having someone experienced in teaching magic could speed up our understanding, rather than waiting for Tommy to relay information. I know you're cautious about forming an alliance."

"Where would you suggest placing her coven if they join us?" Elara asked.

Briana considered the question before answering. "One possibility is the forest between Black Claw and Red Fang. That way, they'd be surrounded by our known allies. However, that area is where much of the magic activity is happening, so it could be easier for them to conceal anything they might be doing against you. It's not a bad location—they'd be between us, Blue Moon, and White Diamond, which offers some strategic advantage. But it's not close to the packhouse, so if they're in danger and need help, response time would be longer. Another option is the forest just north of the packhouse. That would keep them close for assistance and allow easier access, enabling us to learn more. The trade-off is losing some of the natural buffer provided by the forest and ally packs."

Jax's voice cut in through our link. "I vote to keep them close." Since I had opened the link to include them in the conversation, their input was valuable. They knew Elara and this pack better than I did. "We can observe and learn more effectively without spreading ourselves too thin."

Dev nodded in agreement. "I concur. Keeping them near the pack means we can better support everyone in town as well. She might even help calm the nerves of pack members while they're here."

Elara shot a playful glare at Dev. "I'm not about to let her put a spell on pack members, you idiot!"

Dev grinned. "You know what I mean. She brings a calm to the forest. Even you haven't tried to rip anyone's head off since she arrived. Maybe we could make use of her unique presence, that's all."

Elara turned her attention back to Briana. "How soon can your coven members move in?"

Without a word, Briana waved her hand, and the forest behind her shimmered like a delicate metallic curtain fluttering in the breeze. Beyond it, men and women appeared, dressed in old-world traveling clothes in shades of beige and brown. Each had several brown leather packs resting at their feet. It was like stepping into a renaissance film.

Elara stepped forward, hands on her hips. "It's a bit presumptuous to assume we'd let you stay, don't you think?"

Briana's tone was steady but firm. "We haven't assumed anything, Alpha. This is simply our situation. We have been nomads for some time now. Given the threat on their lives, I don't let them wander far from me. To avoid any suspicion, we have no intention of working

against you. My coven has already suffered enough at the hands of one of our own. We seek only your safety and protection.”

Elara nodded thoughtfully, then turned to Jax and Dev. “Escort them to the forest north of the packhouse. They can use the private clearing there. We’ll go speak with Melanie,” she glanced at me, “and organize meals.”

I nodded in agreement, and Jax and Dev responded with a crisp, “Yes, Alpha.” We all moved smoothly to our assigned tasks.

I opened the passenger door for Elara, who gave me a questioning look. I said nothing—just a polite gesture. Luna Beth would have my head if I didn’t show proper manners, especially in front of guests. We were still working on establishing Elara’s authority as Alpha within her own pack.

Once we were driving and out of earshot of the others, Elara turned to me sharply. “What was that about?”

I smiled slightly, choosing to play dumb until I had all the context. “You’re going to need to give me more details if you want an answer.”

She narrowed her eyes. “You holding onto me... opening the door... What was all that?”

“First off, any man who’s never opened a door for you deserves a punch in the dick. It’s rude. As for holding you, my wolf wanted you close. I didn’t think you’d appreciate me shoving you behind my back to protect you, which was his plan. So I compromised. You didn’t seem to mind.”

I glanced sideways to gauge her reaction.

She exhaled with a hint of amusement. “I wasn’t about to fight with you in front of strangers.” Then, softer, “I do appreciate you not shoving me back.” That sounded a little forced. Maybe I wasn’t the only one taking cues from my wolf.

“Do you think Melanie is still mad at me? Will she help with these witches?”

Her uncertainty stung. Too many people in this pack had chipped away at her confidence and her ability to lead.

“I don’t think she’s mad at you,” I assured her. “I believe she understands, but she’s overwhelmed. If we can get Omegas to help her feed the coven, that’ll be a good start.”

Elara nodded, staring out the side window, lost in thought.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 386

49 – Elara

Ben wasn't wrong. Melanie wasn't angry with me at all; in fact, she eagerly seized the opportunity to prove her loyalty by personally taking charge of preparing meals for the coven. Once she got started, there was no stopping her whirlwind of energy. I gave her the freedom to select five Omegas to assist her with the task and to gather anything necessary for the coven's needs.

A few hours after our meeting, Jax and Dev reported that every member of the coven had been accounted for and was comfortably settled in the clearing near the packhouse. I sent them off to update the rest of the warriors and prepare them to learn new scent markers so we could easily distinguish allies from enemies.

"Now, I just have to break it to the pack that I'm bringing witches into our home—and that they have to behave themselves," I muttered under my breath, though Ben was close enough to hear.

"Is it really that bad?" he asked, his voice calm but curious.

I paused, locking eyes with him for a moment before it dawned on me—Ben had never actually been inside the packhouse with me before. He hadn't witnessed the hostility I faced, like the time Jeff twisted rumors among the shopkeepers and I got chewed out for it. This was going to be a harsh reality check for him. My pack had always been wary of me stepping into my father's shoes, but now that he was gone and couldn't shield me from the worst of it, the situation was far more complicated than I'd realized. Ben might even decide to reject me and walk away. I mean, who wants a mate who's not accepted by their own pack? Especially when you're the Alpha that everyone resents—an Alpha who can't even command basic respect, all because I'm missing a third leg.

I rolled my eyes. "Why don't you come see for yourself?"

Without waiting for a response, I started walking. He could either follow or not. As I moved through the house, a strange feeling settled in my chest. I'd never loved this enormous place; it always felt excessive, like someone trying too hard to appear important. Our pack had always been relatively small—between three and five hundred members at any given time. Most of them ran small family businesses or served as warriors. Others left to pursue higher education and only came back when they were ready to retire.

There was never really a reason for a packhouse this grand. Especially not until this rogue and witch problem arose. I couldn't even remember the last time my father had entertained members from another pack here.

"What?" Ben's voice startled me from behind, and I realized I'd stopped moving, staring into the grand formal living room. "Is everything okay? Jax, Dev?"

I blinked and shook myself out of my thoughts. "Yeah, everything's fine. I was just thinking about how useless this house really is. Why didn't my dad ever fix it up or move somewhere smaller?" I spun around, taking in every detail.

"What do you mean?" Ben asked as I completed my turn.

“I don’t know why it never occurred to me before, but this entire house feels pointless. My dad was an only child, I’m an only child, and we hardly ever entertain anyone. So why the hell do we need a house this big?”

“Maybe your ancestors needed a larger place?” he suggested.

I snorted. “That was rhetorical. My ancestors were jerks who needed to feel bigger and better than everyone else.”

Ben raised an eyebrow. “What exactly are you saying?”

“I’m not sure yet,” I admitted with a shrug. “One problem at a time. Come on, let’s go meet the pack.” I laughed dryly.

He followed me out the door as we made our way down the lane. I couldn’t help but notice the ostentatious design spilling out here as well. At least the circular driveway was practical for coming and going, but the statues, ornamental trees, and elaborate landscaping looked more fitting for an Alpha King in his castle than for an Alpha with a pack of just three hundred members.

Once we reached the main drive, I led Ben to the left. Our pack only had four main roads; everything else was a network of trails created by running, walking, or driving off-road vehicles. This was one thing I loved about my pack—the simplicity and minimalism. I just wished that aesthetic extended into the packhouse itself, but I had a feeling my great-great-grandfather had deliberately made it stand out, wanting to assert his importance when he built it.

We passed the entrance to the training grounds, and a memory of when the Silver Crescent guys first arrived hit me suddenly. We mostly walked in silence. Ben asked a few questions about the houses and pack history as we headed toward the center of town, but he didn’t chatter incessantly. The quiet was a welcome change.

The main stretch of town consisted of two parallel roads lined with most of the shops and restaurants. At the far end, a perpendicular road connected them and housed our school, along with the homes of several elders. I wondered if that arrangement was the elders’ design or my ancestors’.

I took Ben into every shop, introducing him as our new Beta. Everyone seemed to accept him when I made him part of the pack, though I knew he hadn’t used the mindlink or his aura with anyone out of respect. He truly had been trained well to be a leader. I didn’t mention that he was my mate, and he didn’t correct me when I introduced him.

Most of the pack members were polite to the newcomer. I’d never seen my father do any of this—he rarely inducted new members, and he hadn’t gotten to this part of my training before he died. Most of the females seemed fine with me as Alpha; it was the males I worried about.

Finally, we reached Deacon's shop. The last time I'd seen him, he'd stormed out of my office, telling me I wasn't his Alpha and warning me to fix things so the pack wouldn't be afraid.

The little bell above the shop door chimed as we entered. If Deacon weren't such a pain, this would be one of my favorite places. He and his mate ran an apothecary of sorts. His mate specialized mainly in kitchen and healing supplies. She was a healer by trade but didn't want to work at the pack hospital, so she handled smaller issues. Werewolves didn't get sick like humans, but when injured or ill, herbal treatments often worked better than modern medicine. Her skills allowed our pack doctor to focus on the more serious cases.

Lately, they'd been busier than ever.

"What do you want?" a growl came from behind me.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 387

50 – Elara

I had hoped to see Melodie first. At least she would have managed to appear calm and polite, even if only for show.

"Hello, Deacon. I wanted to introduce you to our new Beta..." I began, but he cut me off abruptly.

"So now that your father's gone, you're just going to toss Richard and the others aside?" His voice was sharp, almost bitter. Ben tensed beside me but remained still.

"My team isn't my father's team, and frankly, it's none of your concern. This is how things will be from now on," I said firmly.

Deacon sneered, glancing over my shoulder. "Maybe you'll actually get her to do her damn job."

Ben didn't hesitate this time. He stepped forward, closing the distance until he was nose to nose with Deacon. "You will not disrespect the Alpha in my presence," he warned, his aura radiating power that filled the room. Deacon tried to resist, but it was futile—Ben was strong. I had seen him confront me enough times to know this was a different level entirely. Deacon's head dropped slightly, forced into submission.

"Your Alpha is doing you a favor by introducing me herself," Ben continued. "She's too polite to use her aura on you out of respect for the pack members she cares about. But I don't have that same restraint. If you come at her in any way I consider uncivil, you'll get the same treatment as Jeff. Understand?"

Jeff grumbled low in his chest, clearly unhappy about being outmatched, but he wasn't about to argue with someone higher-ranked who wasn't afraid to use force. The problem

was, Deacon had just made me look ineffective as a leader. His petty excuse about me respecting them more only highlighted my weakness. Before I could signal Ben to step back, Melodie appeared.

“Hello, Alpha, Beta. It’s a pleasure to meet you. We’re grateful you’re here to assist the Alpha during this difficult transition. I know the circumstances aren’t ideal. Alpha, if you need anything, please don’t hesitate to ask. I want to assure you that your mother’s tea was always handled with the utmost care. And, not to place blame, but for clarity, I personally sealed her canister following her usual specifications. I hope you don’t doubt me.”

I shook my head. “I don’t, Melodie. Jeff confessed everything. His ego just wouldn’t let him give credit to anyone else.” I rolled my eyes, realizing I had never considered Melodie a suspect. After all, she was the one who blended and packed my mother’s very specific tea blend. I shouldn’t have been so comfortable with that thought. Maybe Jax and Dev had questioned her. I wasn’t ready for all of this.

“Is that why you brought witches into the pack?” she asked softly, almost as if she didn’t want to hear the answer but needed to.

Her mate, however, exploded with anger.

“WITCHES?! Why the hell are you bringing those poisoning cowards here? They started this mess in the first place!”

I took a deep breath and addressed the reasonable mate. “Unfortunately, they’re affected by the same rogue casters recruiting rogue wolves. They’re here, and I need Melodie’s help.” I looked at Melodie. “Would you be willing to work with the coven leader and help us dismantle some of the spells cast around our pack? They’re kitchen and green witches, and they’ll need to assist in reducing the chaos magic. It’s part of why we’re having so much trouble finding and capturing these rogues. This will give us a fighting chance. I trust you to see through anything suspicious about their practices. I haven’t had enough interactions to trust them wholeheartedly, but I do believe they’re here to help, not harm us.”

“I’d be happy to help, Alpha.”

“Over my dead body you’re going anywhere near those casting scum,” Deacon snapped, crossing his arms as if that settled the matter. He was seriously mistaken.

My aura swept over him, calm but firm. She will assist me in whatever way I deem necessary as Alpha of this pack. Didn’t he demand I do my job? Just because he disliked the solution didn’t mean he could change the plan. He had no say. His opinion had never been asked for—or offered respectfully. He was a pack member, not a decision-maker. “Stand down before I make you stand down.” I pressed my aura into him. I hated using it; I wanted people to follow me willingly, not out of fear. But now that Ben had set the standard, there was no other way. That little reminder made me furious all over again, and my aura throbbed with raw aggression. “Are we clear?” I asked, my voice low and harsh, pushing into the bond that connected us.

He let out a small sound—not a whimper, more of a grunt of resistance. My wolf growled deep in my chest. She hated being disobeyed or having her authority challenged. “I said, are... we... clear?” I emphasized each word with a pulse of pressure. I was ready to bring him to his knees if necessary.

“Oh, for Goddess’s sake, Deacon. Just answer the Alpha. Quit being difficult. You’re not going to say no.”

He grunted again, then finally muttered, “Fine.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t catch that.”

“Fine. We’re clear. But only because my mate is better at convincing me than you are.”

“What are you, twelve? I don’t care as long as you’re not a pain in my ass and don’t piss off the casters who are actually here to help us.” I turned to leave. “Melodie, I’ll be in touch when I know more.”

“Okay, Alpha.”

As we walked away, an epic fight erupted behind us. From the few words I caught, it sounded like Deacon might be sleeping outside tonight.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 388

51 – Elara

A simmering fury churned beneath my skin, fueled by the fact that I was being forced to command one of my own pack members as Alpha. I knew Ben sensed the tension radiating from me, yet he chose not to question it. That silent understanding only made the weight heavier. This was exactly what I had struggled against my entire life. Our pack was small—too small to justify compelling anyone to obey if you led with true respect. That was the lesson my mother had taught me, and she earned the admiration of every pack member because of it. My father’s leadership was marked by kindness and empathy. I should be able to emulate that. But clearly, somewhere along the way, we had missed the key lessons on how to lead with grace.

I wrapped up the formal introductions of Ben to the pack. Most of the members had already met him and the rest of the Silver Crescent team during their time here. They were skilled at mingling, quick to forge friendships. I couldn’t help but notice a few lingering glances from female pack members, their eyes drawn to him a little longer than polite. I had to admit to myself that Ben was undeniably handsome, even if his strict, rigid demeanor made him seem unapproachable. If he were just a human, he’d blend seamlessly with military officers—his hair always perfectly trimmed, his clothes impeccably clean, tailored to fit every curve. Ugh, no! I was angry at him. I couldn’t let myself dwell on how attractive he was, or how effortlessly he could smile, causing even the most committed females to giggle and blush. I hated that about him.

“Hey El. The coven’s arrived and they’re all set up. Brianna says they’re good for the night—no need to worry about dinner. Any other instructions?” Jax’s voice pulled me back from my spiraling thoughts.

“Thank f*ck!” I muttered under my breath.

“Really? That didn’t take too long,” Jax teased.

“Not you, Jax. It’s just... this day needs to end.” I sighed, trying to steady my voice. “Tell Brianna her coven can meet at the packhouse for breakfast. Melanie’s really excited to meet them—she’s hoping to learn some new kitchen tricks. Then we’ll plan where to start scanning and dismantling any harmful magic. We should post a patrol guard with them overnight, just in case they need anything.”

“Got it, Alpha.”

I turned and stepped out of the last shop, my body heavy with exhaustion and my mind aching from the relentless pressure. So many things were happening at once, and I felt like I wasn’t making a single difference. Darkness had fallen. I needed food and rest to prepare for whatever tomorrow might bring.

“Hey! Wait up. Where are you going?” Ben’s voice came from behind me, breaking through the fog of my thoughts. Just minutes ago, I had been wrestling internally with my female pack members about him, then completely forgot he was still with me. I really needed sleep.

Rubbing my face, I slowed my pace. “Sorry. Jax told me the coven’s settled for the night in the forest behind the packhouse. And then I realized just how much we’ve done today. I’m suddenly exhausted. I need to eat, then sleep. They’re going to have breakfast at the packhouse—at least, that’s what I told them.”

I kept walking toward what was, I supposed, now ‘our’ home. He didn’t say a word, trailing just behind my right shoulder, exactly where a good Beta should be. Asshole. No one had ever stirred such conflicting emotions within me—not even Jax or Dev, who I’d grown up with.

We passed through the double front doors, moving past the foyer and the formal living room, heading down the hall toward the kitchen.

“Hey Melanie! Just need something small. Mind if we raid the cabinets?” I called out.

Halfway through the sentence, Melanie beat me to it. “I’ll do you one better, Alpha.” She hurried over to one of the huge ovens and pulled out two plates piled high beneath foil.

“What’s that?” I asked, trying to keep the surprise from my voice. I shouldn’t have been shocked—Melanie was the most perceptive person I’d ever met. It was like she anticipated everyone’s needs before they even realized them themselves.

“I figured since you were out visiting the shops today, you probably didn’t stop for lunch. So I made sure there was something ready when you got back.” She shrugged, placing the

plates on the kitchen island and immediately returning to her work, as if this was just another ordinary day.

“Wow. Thank you.” My voice softened with genuine gratitude.

“Thanks, Melanie,” Ben said warmly as his arm brushed past me. The contact sent a sudden burst of goosebumps racing down my arm. When I glanced over, he was walking toward the small table by the window, which looked out onto the patio. Maybe he sensed I was upset and was giving me space. The problem was, now I wasn’t sure where to go. I hadn’t eaten in the dining room since losing my parents. Little things like that kept hitting me hard lately. I didn’t want to enter that room without them, but when the coven members started coming regularly, I might not have a choice. Instead, I chose to stand and chat with Melanie about the coven. It was a decent distraction from the heaviness in my chest.

“Mel, the coven members are going to start taking meals here, starting with breakfast tomorrow. Sorry to spring that on you. Do you need any extra help to make it happen?”

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 389

“No, Alpha. Dev and I already sorted everything out earlier. We’re all set,” she replied smoothly, her tone calm yet gently confirming my approval. “Would you like to see the dining room? You and the boys haven’t really used it much lately, so I had the girls arrange it for tonight. Hope that’s alright with you.” There was no hesitation in her voice—just a quiet check to make sure she was on the right track. Honestly, she’s incredible.

“That sounds perfect,” I said, appreciating her thoughtfulness. “If you need anything else to help them settle in, just let me know. I want this to be a win-win situation, but right now, it feels like they’re contributing way more than we are.”

She smiled knowingly. “We’ve planned a pretty standard menu for tomorrow. None of them asked for anything special, but I’ll wait to see how they eat in the morning before making any changes.” She winked at me, fully aware that the boys were being polite and that she’d have to coax out any real preferences. That’s exactly the kind of challenge she thrives on. I couldn’t help but smile at the thought as I quietly finished my meal, watching her move with effortless grace around the kitchen.

When I got up to clear my plate, I glanced around and noticed I was alone. Where had Ben disappeared to? His silence was unnerving—almost eerie, even for me. He’d been shadowing me all day, but maybe he was already tired of trailing behind. I’ve seen plenty of guys who couldn’t keep up, so it wouldn’t surprise me.

The hallway leading to my room was unusually still. I realized I hadn’t been truly alone in this house since my mother’s attack. The silence felt heavy, almost suffocating. As I reached my door, the scent of Ben hit me—he’d showered, and the steam had only intensified his intoxicating fragrance. I hated how close he was right now. Taking a deep

breath, I steeled myself before opening the door. I knew the smell would be stronger inside, and I didn't want to enjoy it—I wanted to be angry.

“You gonna tell me what the hell is wrong, or should I just keep guessing?” His voice was low, teasing, yet edged with something more serious.

I shot back, unable to resist a jab, “Why are you on my couch when there's a perfectly good bed right across the hall?”

He was sprawled out like a model in those perfectly fitted shorts and a casual t-shirt, one arm covering his eyes, the other resting on his waist with a thumb hooked into the waistband. Damn it. I couldn't stop my mind from drifting south of that waistband. I forced myself to turn and head straight for the bathroom, slamming the door a little too hard behind me.

“That's a 'no,' then. Got it,” I heard his muffled voice through the door, clear despite the barrier.

I took my time in the shower, letting the warm water soothe my nerves. Part of me hoped he'd fall asleep waiting outside. Another part meticulously groomed itself, hoping he might notice the effort. And then there was this tiny, rebellious spark inside me, wondering if I could sneak off and indulge in a little private fantasy—one fueled by the vivid image burned into my mind—without him catching on to the lingering scent. Probably not, but I was desperate enough to try. I was wound tight, and I'd only ever seen him without a shirt once. This emotional roller coaster was brutal. I just wanted to get off.

Continue Regular Chapter Reading Below

Chapter 390

52 – Elara

After spending an excessive amount of time in the bathroom—plucking, trimming, brushing, and applying lotion until I run out of things to do—I finally step out. The room is cloaked in darkness, and I can hear Ben's steady, soft breathing. It's even enough that I'm almost certain he's asleep, or perhaps he's just exceptionally good at pretending to be. I slip under the covers, but restlessness clings to me. I toss and turn, unable to find a comfortable position, and my mind refuses to quiet down. Thoughts dart around like frantic fireflies, bouncing from one worry to the next, pounding in my head. Rogues infiltrating my pack, peddling drugs to the pups. Witches spiraling out of control, aiding those rogues in an attempt to seize power. My parents, the coven I allowed onto our lands, pack members betraying me without hesitation while secretly working with my father. And then there's the mate I desire but simultaneously reject. Why can't I catch a moment's peace to gather my scattered thoughts? I silently plead to the moon goddess above. A sting of tears pricks behind my eyelids. If this is the weight of being an Alpha, why did my father never warn me? Why didn't he share how grueling it truly is? I've spent half my life fighting, bargaining, negotiating, but this... this burden was never discussed. I inhale deeply, my breath trembling, and then a soothing warmth begins to flow up my legs like golden honey,

enveloping my entire body. The tightness in my chest loosens with another slow breath, and my eyelids grow heavy. What is this strange comfort? Before I can look around to figure out why I feel as if wrapped in a soft, cozy blanket, darkness overtakes me.

I awaken to an empty room. The faint scent of Ben lingers in the air—he was here not long ago. I know he's still upset with me for not speaking to him last night. How do I explain that I don't want to force anyone to follow me to someone who has no issues with it? I want to lead my pack my way, and no one—not even my mate—can dictate otherwise. I roll my eyes and rise from the bed. Let him be mad; I'll deal with it later. He's already made it clear he isn't going anywhere. Meanwhile, I have a thousand other pressing matters, and I'm not even sure what exactly he wants from me.

This morning, in line with my mother's expectations, I take care in choosing my outfit. When meeting the leader of another group, it's important to show respect by putting effort into your appearance. It's a gesture both for their sake and mine. I would have done so yesterday had I known who we were meeting. I hope our conversation will be brief so we can quickly focus on the business of removing whatever hexes or spells are plaguing my pack. Brianna does not disappoint—she arrives fully prepared, matching my energy with her own.

Accompanying her is another woman, positioned just to Brianna's right, in the same way Ben sits beside me. I don't think witches refer to their second-in-command as 'Betas,' but this woman must hold a similar rank within the coven. Brianna makes no introductions, and I choose not to press. Perhaps their customs differ from ours.

I spread a large map across the grand dining room table, outlining the general borders and details of our territory. Ben adds notes on areas where we've observed the most activity, and together we describe the cave we discovered at the water's edge near Junior's land.

After several long minutes of scanning the map and exchanging silent glances with the woman beside her, Brianna selects a region she wants to inspect in person.

"Will you be removing any wards or hexes today?" Ben asks.

"If possible, Beta," the woman finally replies. "Until we identify the nature of the magic involved, we can't determine the necessary countermeasures." Her name is Marietta, and I sense a certain sharpness in her tone. "I hope you didn't expect an immediate fix to your problems."

I feel Ben tense beside me, though his face remains unreadable. I gently touch his forearm under the table—a subtle warning, as much to calm him as to reassure.

"Easy, Marietta. Not everyone is looking for a quick solution. They're inexperienced with our ways but seem eager to learn. Extend them the same patience you'd offer a witchling discovering her powers for the first time." My words seem to unsettle Marietta. She doesn't appear hostile, but there's a flicker of hesitation. I wonder what might have caused her to challenge her superior. Then again, perhaps this is just how witches operate.

“We will assess the situation thoroughly and bring you up to speed on what magic we believe has been cast on your pack,” Brianna explains. “Only then can we determine the best course of action to assist your pack—and, by extension, our covens.”

“Covens? As in more than one?” Ben interrupts before I can respond.

“Yes, pup. More than one,” Marietta replies sharply but quiets when Brianna places a calming hand on her arm.

“We merged our covens when it became clear our members were being targeted specifically,” Brianna adds more gently. A brief, unreadable exchange passes between the two women. I’m sure Ben caught the ‘pup’ comment, and I know neither of us is viewed as mature in their eyes. Though they don’t seem much older than me, the way they speak suggests otherwise. Even if they were in their thirties, Ben, at nineteen, would still be a pup. At twenty-five, I’m hardly more seasoned, but Brianna at least tries to treat me as the leader I am. Marietta, however, seems more guarded. I can’t tell if it’s because of our species, our age, or simply us in general that has her on edge.

“We should start with a tour of your pack, beginning here,” Marietta says, pointing delicately to the northwestern corner of our territory, tracing the border we share with Red Fang.

“We should notify Junior and introduce you. His pack is experiencing similar issues, though not as severe as ours. Unfortunately, I believe that’s a gender-related factor,” I add, watching the two women’s eyes flash at my comment. Good—at least someone understands the struggles I face.

Once we finalize our plan and everyone has eaten, I instruct Melanie and the other Omegas to assist the coven members in settling in. I want them to have full access to the guest wing for showers and any personal needs. I’ve also granted them use of the kitchen, gym, and laundry facilities. I know they’re accustomed to being one with nature, but sometimes modern comforts help boost morale.

I insist that Jax and Dev join us. As my lead warriors, they need firsthand knowledge of the types of magic we’re dealing with. They assign a few warriors to support the coven, ensure patrols are aware of our movements, and inform Junior about the situation. He agrees to meet us at the shoreline where the most activity has been observed. Brianna and Marietta don’t request additional coven members to accompany us. Whether that’s confidence or a sign of trust we’ve earned remains to be seen.