

The Lost Lycan Princess

Chapter 2 The Alpha's Prisoner

Silence fell like a blade. Valerius.. a legend.. some believed the stories.. others did not.. The only real truth is that no one really knew what had happened because the truth is always twisted depending on who says it. The only ones that still knew the truth were trapped on the other side of the veil. Until now.

The warriors stared at her as if she'd grown a second head. Some took an unconscious step back; others shifted forward, hands inching toward weapons. The scent of their fear and suspicion spiked, sharp as iron on her tongue.

Only the Alpha didn't move.

His golden gaze stayed locked on her, unreadable, but the air around him changed. Power rolled off him in a quiet, gathering wave. His wolf surged closer, pressing against his skin until the fine hairs on Lina's arms rose in answer.

He was dangerous.

Of course he is, her lycan murmured. He is what you were born to be.

Her muscles tightened in defiance.

"Valerius," one of the warriors repeated, voice low and disbelieving. "That line is extinct. Everyone knows that."

Lina's lips twitched into something that was not quite a smile. "Everyone," she echoed softly, "is wrong."

The murmur swelled into a growl. A broad-shouldered soldier to the Alpha's left—Riven, she caught from the snapped whisper of another—took a step toward her, his eyes flashing bright, his wolf bristling.

"That's enough," the Alpha said.

He didn't raise his voice. He didn't have to. The sound of it slid through the clearing like a command written in stone, and every warrior stilled.

Riven clenched his jaw, but retreated to his place.

The Alpha—Kael, a part of her supplied without knowing how she knew—studied her in a silence that stretched taut and thin. Lina fought the urge to look away. She had once stood

before her father's council at eight years old, spine straight, chin lifted, while they debated whether teaching her to fight would make her too dangerous.

She had not bowed then. She would not bow now.

Finally, Kael spoke.

"Bind her," he said.

The words hit harder than a blow. For a heartbeat, Lina thought she'd misheard. Bind. As if she were some rogue to be dragged in. As if stepping into this world meant surrendering to it chains-first.

Six warriors moved as one.

Her lycan snarled, rising fast and hot. Instinct screamed at her to run, to fight, to tear through them and vanish back into the trees. She could. She knew she could. She had taken down beasts in the cursed forest that made these males look like children playing at war.

But the forest was gone.

And beyond Kael, she glimpsed something else—torches lining a distant wall, the faint outline of towers against the sky. A settlement. A stronghold.

A kingdom.

She had waited three centuries for answers. Three centuries for a chance to know what else was there in the story that had ruined them.. who had ordered her people's slaughter, who had twisted the magic that trapped the rest of them away from the world. If she shed blood now, she might never get close enough to learn anything.

The warriors approached cautiously, as if expecting her to explode. Their wolves hovered just beneath their skin, restless, uneasy. One of them produced iron cuffs etched with faint runes that made the hair on her arms bristle.

Silver, her wolf warned. And something else.

Lina lifted her hands slowly, palms open.

Gasps rose around her. Wolves didn't submit easily. Alphas submitted last of all.

They don't know what I am, she reminded herself. And they won't. Not yet. She had suppressed her aura and wolves could not interact with lycans unless lycans allowed them to.

If this was a play, she would choose her moment.

The iron came down around her wrists, cold and biting. The runes flared faintly, sending a sting up her arms, dampening the hum of her wolf. Lina ground her teeth against the flood of nausea, refusing to flinch.

Kael watched every twitch of her muscles, every shift of her scent.

“Search the border,” he told his men. “If the Veil is gone, I want to know why. And I want to know if anything else came through.”

“Yes, Alpha,” came the immediate reply.

He turned back to her.

“What did you do,” he asked quietly, “to that forest?”

Lina met his eyes, the shackles heavy around her bones.

“I walked out,” she said. “That’s all.”

His gaze flickered, just for a heartbeat, to the place behind her where the shimmering light had once glowed. Now, there was nothing but darkness and trees.

No Veil.

No curse.

Just night.

“Take her to the fortress,” he ordered.

Riven stepped behind her and gripped her arm, not quite gentle, not quite rough. “Move,” he snapped.

Lina looked up at the sky—at the wild, bright moon unobscured by magic—and let herself have one long, steady breath of free air.

Then she let them march her away.

The Arden Fortress was carved from stone and history.

Torches burned along the walls, their flames sputtering in the night wind. Guards paced the battlements, silhouettes sharp against the moon. As Lina was led through the enormous iron gates, every instinct screamed at her.

Walls. Bars. Traps.

Her lycan clawed at her ribs, restless, agitated. This is not home, it growled. This is a cage.

I know, she thought back. But cages have doors. Doors have keys.

And kingdoms had secrets.

Inside the outer walls, the fortress opened into a wide courtyard. Wolves in human form sparred with wooden weapons in a training ring. Stable hands led snorting horses toward a long, low building. Servants flickered at the edges, eyes wide as they took in the strange girl in shackles being escorted by half the Alpha's guard.

Whispers followed her like a second shadow.

"Who is she?"

"Did you see her eyes?"

"She smells... wrong."

"Not wrong. Old."

Riven gave a low warning growl and the whispers cut off sharply.

They took her through a set of heavy double doors into the main keep. The air inside was warmer, filled with the scent of burning wood, old stone, and something that stirred a different ache in her chest.

Pack.

She had not realized, until stepping into it, how much she remembered that scent. How much she had missed it. The forest had held no pack, no layered, living chorus of wolves moving and breathing together.

This place did.

Her lycan went still, nose tilted upward, recognizing what her mind wanted to reject.

We are not theirs, Lina hissed internally.

But they are ours, the lycan replied unexpectedly. Lycans are Lycans. Blood remembers.

Riven steered her down a corridor lined with tapestries. Scenes of battle, of wolves in mid-shift, of a crowned figure holding a sword to the sky. Lina's step faltered as her gaze snagged on one in particular—a painting woven in thread.

A battlefield. Bodies. Fire. A shape in the background, swallowed by trees and darkness.

A forest she knew too well.

She dragged her eyes away before the memories swallowed her.

"In here," Riven said.

He shoved open a heavy door and guided her into a stone chamber. Not a dungeon—there were no chains on the walls, no damp or mildew—but not exactly comfortable, either. A narrow bed, a small table, barred windows set high in the wall. A door of solid iron.

A cage dressed up as a room.

He turned her to face him and, with obvious reluctance, removed the cuffs. The absence of their burning weight made her bones feel light, her wolf surging forward in a relieved rush.

"Don't shift," Riven warned. "You'll regret it."

Lina rolled her wrists and lifted a brow. "Planning to watch me all night?"

Color darkened his cheekbones. "Don't flatter yourself." He stepped back toward the doorway. "The Alpha will question you in the morning. I wouldn't try anything before then."

"Or what?" she asked softly.

His gaze hardened. "Or you'll learn how we deal with liars and traitors in this kingdom."

He slammed the door.

A lock clicked.

Silence settled, heavy and sudden.

Lina stood in the center of the room, rubbing the faint red grooves the cuffs had left on her skin. Her heart had calmed, but her mind spun, cataloguing scents, routes, the tension in Riven's shoulders when she'd said Valerius. The flicker in Kael's eyes.

They knew the name. They feared it. That alone told her enough to be very, very careful.

She crossed the room and tested the window. The bars held firm, cold beneath her fingers. Beyond them, she could see the inner courtyard, the line of torches at the wall, the dark smear of forest beyond.

Not her forest. A different one. But still trees. Still shadows.

Her lycan prowled along the edges of her mind, restless, agitated. We should run. Find the wild. Find the open.

“We will,” she murmured. “When we know where to run to.”

Three hundred years had taught her that escaping blindly was another kind of prison. Freedom without knowledge was just a slower way to die.

The door’s lock rattled.

Lina turned, expecting Riven.

Instead, the person who stepped into the room was smaller, slighter, carrying a tray.

A woman, maybe in her late thirties, with dark hair pulled into a loose braid and lines of quiet worry etched around her eyes. She wore simple clothes, not the uniform of a warrior, and her steps were cautious but not afraid.

Lina’s lycan eased slightly.

“I brought you food,” the woman said, voice soft. “And water. You looked like you needed both.”

She set the tray on the table—a bowl of stew, thick and steaming; a chunk of bread; a metal cup of water. The scents hit Lina like a blow. Her stomach cramped, reminding her she had not eaten anything that wasn’t berries, roots, or hunted meat in... she wasn’t sure how long.

“Thank you,” Lina said slowly.

The woman studied her for a moment, head tilted. “My name is Elara,” she offered. “I serve as the pack healer.” A faint smile touched her lips. “And sometimes I sneak food to the Alpha’s prisoners before the guards remember to care if they’re hungry.”

Lina blinked. “Then I’m lucky you sneaked fast.”

“You’re very lucky,” Elara agreed quietly, “in more ways than you know.”

There was something in her tone that made Lina’s wolf raise its head. Not threat. Not mockery.

Warning.

Lina stepped closer, ignoring the way the room seemed to tilt toward the food. “What do they think I am?” she asked.

Elara’s gaze flicked to the open door behind her, then back. “Confused,” she said. “Dangerous. Maybe both.” She hesitated. “But the Alpha is not a cruel man. He’ll want truth before blood.”

“And if the truth is something he doesn’t like?”

Elara’s eyes darkened. “Then I hope,” she said, “that you’re not foolish enough to give it to him all at once.”

Lina’s breath stalled.

She had expected suspicion, anger, fear. She had not expected... advice.

“Why are you telling me this?” she asked.

Elara looked at her for a long moment, something searching and sad in her gaze.

“Because,” she said softly, “when you stepped through that broken Veil, the whole forest shuddered. The magic woke. I felt it from here.”

Lina’s skin prickled. “You felt it?”

Elara nodded. “I’ve felt that same signature once before. In old wounds. Old scars. Old... ghosts.” She swallowed, her hand lifting unconsciously to rest over her heart. “You smell like them. You feel like them. Like a line the world decided was gone.”

Valerius.

The unspoken word thrummed between them.

Lina looked away, throat tight.

Elara moved toward the door, then paused. “Eat,” she said. “Rest. The Alpha will call for you at dawn. Don’t meet his temper with your own.” A faint, wry smile tugged at her lips. “It never ends well.”

“When you say ‘temper,’” Lina said slowly, “do you mean his... or mine?”

“Both,” Elara replied. “You’re more alike than you think.”

She left before Lina could ask what she meant.

The lock turned again.

Lina stood in the quiet, heart beating too fast, Elara's words echoing in her head.

More alike than you think.

She moved to the table and sank onto the edge of the bed, pulling the tray closer. The first bite of stew nearly undid her. Flavor exploded over her tongue—salt and fat and warmth. Her throat worked to swallow past the sudden ache rising from somewhere deep and starved inside her.

She ate slowly, forcing herself not to devour everything at once. Survival had taught her discipline. Hunger had taught her patience—eat fast when you must, but savor when you can. This food was not hunted in a cursed forest, not ripped raw from life. It was made. Cooked. Shared.

Pack.

When the bowl was empty and the cup drained, she set them aside and lay back on the narrow bed, staring up at the rough stone ceiling.

Beyond the walls, wolves moved. She could hear their distant howls, their howls answering back. She could feel the hum of the bond that tied them all to this place, to each other.

Once, she had felt something like that.

Once, she had been surrounded by voices and laughter and the deep, steady heartbeat of a tribe that knew her name.

Lina.

Her mother's voice whispered through memory or a mind link that felt like a ghost, soft and fierce. You are Valerius. You are Alpha-born. Remember that, even if the world forgets us.

"I remember," Lina murmured into the darkness.

Her lycan curled around her from the inside, not quite comfort, not quite calm. It watched the door, the window, the shadows.

We will have answers, she promised. We will know why.

Lina closed her eyes.

Sleep came slowly, wrapping itself around her like a wary stranger. She drifted in fits, in fragments—fire, screams, the crackling Veil, golden eyes staring at her as if she were the ghost and he the living one.

When she finally slipped under fully, it was to the echo of a howl that didn't come from the pack outside.

It came from her own chest.

Dawn came with a knock that was not really a knock.

The door opened before she could respond.

Lina sat up in one smooth motion, muscles coiled, senses flaring wide.

Kael stood in the doorway.

The torchlight from the corridor threw sharp angles across his face, highlighting the scar that cut from his left temple down to the edge of his jaw, pale against tanned skin. His dark hair was damp, as if he'd washed before coming. He wore simple black trousers and a fitted shirt, not armor, but there was nothing soft about him.

His gaze swept the room in an instant—her, the empty tray, the bed. His scent rolled in behind him, thick with dominance, edged with something restless.

He stepped inside.

Two guards remained outside the threshold. The door shut with a soft, final sound.

For a moment, neither of them spoke.

Lina rose from the bed, bare feet touching cold stone. She did not bow. She did not bare her throat. But she did not reach for him, either. Her wolf watched him through her eyes, curious and coiled.

"Sleep well, forest girl?" he asked, tone dry.

"Better than the last three hundred years," she said.

His jaw ticked.

He crossed the room, not stopping until there was only a small stretch of space between them. Up close, she could see the faint shadows beneath his eyes, the tension in the set of his shoulders. He smelled like dawn air and steel and the faintest hint of something wild.

“Let’s dispense with myths,” he said quietly. “Whatever you are, whoever you are, you stepped through a barrier that has held for generations.”

He lifted his hand—not to touch her, but to tilt her chin up with a single finger, forcing her to meet his gaze.

“Today,” Alpha Kael murmured, golden eyes burning into hers, “you are going to tell me why.”

And Lina, heart pounding, realized the real battle hadn’t been surviving the curse.

It was surviving him.