

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 12: Sophia II - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 12: Sophia II

Chapter 11

Sophia blinked at the three men, confusion writ plain on her face. "What is a pack?" she asked, her tone perfectly genuine.

All three, Orion, Ronan, and Lysander stared at her as if she'd suddenly sprouted a second head right in front of them. Even Ronan, whose usual set expression was somewhere between cheerful and mocking, simply stared, mouth halfway open.

Lysander cleared his throat and tried again, gentler this time. "You don't know what a pack is?" He watched her closely, as if trying to spot some sign of a joke.

Sophia shook her head slowly, her brows wrinkling. "No. I mean, the word is familiar, and I think I've probably read it somewhere, but...I can't really explain it. It's like my brain is skipping."

Ronan glanced at Orion, hoping for some guidance. Orion just shrugged, arms crossed and face unreadable except for a small line of annoyance between his brows. It was clear he was as confused as anyone and no more patient about it.

Ronan offered Sophia a reassuring smile. "Okay, that's...all right. Why don't I explain?" He straightened a little, leaning on the foot of the bed so she could clearly see him. "A pack is basically a big family except not everyone is related by blood. We live together, look out for each other, and protect each other. We share everything: food, work, responsibilities. It's like a territory with a leader or a village." He paused to make sure she was following.

Sophia looked thoughtful, then suddenly her eyes lit up. "Wait, yes! I remember now! I know what it is." She frowned a little, squeezing the candlestick by reflex. "But I don't know why the word felt odd to me at first."

Orion arched a brow, smirking a little. "Are you sure you understand? You don't need him to explain more?"

She turned to glare at him, chin lifting in stubborn challenge. "I understand perfectly. You're the one who struggles, apparently."

Ronan just snickered. "Play nice, kids."

Sophia huffed. "I'm nice. He's the annoying one." She pointed at Orion who scowled.

"Put that ridiculous candle away will you? Holding it doesn't make you seem brilliant." He told her.

Before she and Orion could wind up for another round, Lysander stepped forward, professional tone sliding in. "All right. Enough for now. Sophia, why don't you sit on the chair? I need to do a basic checkup, make sure everything's actually fine."

With a small sigh, Sophia set the candlestick down near her pillow, then perched herself on the wooden chair by the bed. The chair creaked a little under her slight weight. It was the very spot Orion fallen asleep in the night before.

Lysander began his examination, taking her wrist for her pulse, then gently pressing at her side to check for bruising. He moved efficiently and quietly, only pausing to poke at a spot on her shoulder where a deep wound had once been.

"No tenderness?" he asked.

She shook her head. "No, it doesn't even hurt. I feel fine, really."

He checked her eyes, made sure her breathing was steady, then finally straightened and turned to the other two men.

"She's fine," he announced, a note of surprise in his voice. "Actually, completely fine. Her wounds have healed without a trace, no fever, no infection, no sign of leftover trauma. If I didn't know how badly she was hurt, I'd never guess she'd almost died two months ago."

Orion's eyes narrowed. He shoved his hands deeper into his pockets and fixed Sophia with a suspicious stare. "So, if you're so fine, why the fuck are you pretending not to remember anything except your name?" His tone slipped from coldly curious to openly accusatory, voice rising just enough to put everyone on edge.

Sophia looked stung but held her ground. "I'm not pretending! I've told you since I woke up, I don't remember anything before you brought me here. I didn't even know your name until just now. I haven't lied to you. And I had no idea I almost died. By your hands I presume."

"It's not...." Ronan began but Orion cut him off.

Orion's eyes flashed. "I'd know if you were lying." His jaw tightened. "But this whole thing is impossible. There's no way that someone just forgets an entire life and yet somehow knows what a werewolf is. No one else in history has pulled something like this. You must be a spy, a damn good one. Maybe word got out about my ability and whoever sent you trained you, taught you not to trigger anything. That's the only thing that makes sense. Black magic or not, I don't buy your story."

Sophia's shoulders slumped, but she didn't back down. Her voice trembled, but her eyes still shone with fierce truth. "I'm not a spy. I'm not lying. I'm tired of saying it, but it's the truth. I don't know why I can't remember if I could, I'd tell you. And if I was a spy, do you really think I'd mess it up this badly? If I'd planned for this, I'd have a story, at least!"

Orion scowled, advancing a step. "It would be easy to act clueless. Easier, maybe, than giving me a fake story."

Anger flickered in Sophia's eyes. "You're the one acting stupid right now, not me. Stop accusing me of things I haven't done!"

Suddenly, Orion strode forward, rage getting the better of him, hand lifting as if he might slam his fist on the edge of the bed for emphasis. Sophia flinched, her body tensing in fear, but she still met his glare without looking away.

Lysander shot out an arm before Orion could get any closer, forcing the alpha back with surprising strength for such a lean man. "Enough, Orion." His tone was all command, none of the gentle doctor left. With swift, practiced hands, he practically herded Orion backward and toward the door, muscled form blocking the space between him and Sophia.

"What the hell are you doing, Lysander?" Orion barked, struggling against his friend's iron grip. "She's fucking playing us and I need to know how she can get away with shit like this. Maybe she knows a trick or something."

Lysander leaned in, his voice low and urgent. "I need to talk to you. Now. Out in the hall."

Orion opened his mouth to protest again, but Lysander's eyes blazed with rare authority. Lysander has always been like a big brother to Orion. Even if Orion was the alpha, Lysander was the older brother and Orion respected and even feared him a bit. Especially because Lysander had kicked his ass a lot when they were younger.

So seeing that unspoken warning, Orion finally let himself be steered through the door, casting one last warning look over his shoulder at Sophia. Ronan, sensing the sudden gravity of the moment, simply watched in silence, concern etched across his usually cheerful face.

The door closed sharply behind Orion and Lysander, sealing Sophia and Ronan on one side and the two men in the dim, quiet corridor. Orion turned on Lysander, barely reined-in anger and suspicion swirling in his eyes.

"This better be good," he hissed. "What could possibly..."

But Lysander shook his head and cut him off, voice even lower now, almost a whisper. "It is. Um...it's about her condition or what I suspect may be her condition."

"What is it?"

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 13: Amnesia - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 13: Amnesia](#)

Chapter 12

Outside the medical facility, the cold air hit Orion's face like a sharp blade. The heavy stones of the pack's compound seemed even colder under the gray sky. Lysander stood opposite him, arms folded over his chest, looking unusually serious. Orion's shoulders tensed.

Lysander cleared his throat, breaking the silence. "Orion... I...there's something about Sophia's condition I need to explain. Something you ought to know."

Orion raised an eyebrow and shifted his stance. "What is it?"

Lysander scratched the back of his neck as if nervous which was a rare case for the stoic man except when in the presence of his mate.

"It's... well, I suspect she's suffering from some form of memory loss." He told Orion.

Orion frowned. "Like with Zena?"

Lysander released an amused sound. Zena was one of the oldest women in the pack. A feisty woman who usually forgot who her children were. Her condition always hit when it was unexpected. When it wasn't planned. Sometimes she would leave her home saying she was going to get her husband some herbs since he was sick. Her husband had died from the plague that afflicted their pack years before they settled in Nirvana but sometimes it was like she was still stuck in that moment.

"Not really. It's not like the forgetfulness common with age, as is the case with Zena. This is more severe, localized. The ancient texts might call it amnesia...I think, but the term, and knowledge of the condition, isn't well known or understood here."

Orion frowned. "Amnesia? I don't understand, if it's memory loss then it should be something like Sena's condition no?"

"It isn't. There are different cases of this and more to be understood regarding this condition."

"But you've never actually seen a case like this before. How do you know it's amnesia?"

"No," Lysander admitted with a somber nod. "I haven't. There are no known cures, little record of its causes. It's rare, probably considered some kind of curse or spell when it does happen. Whatever her affliction truly is, it's kept her mind locked tight against remembering her past. And from the little knowledge I have regarding this condition, I suspect Sophia is suffering from it. It's all hypothetical really. But she isn't lying to you about not knowing her condition right?"

Orion's jaw clenched. "No."

Lysander shrugged in reply. "And if she isn't lying and she doesn't share the same symptoms as Zena then I suspect that she is suffering from amnesia."

Orion's gaze sharpened as he listened. He noted something beneath Lysander's clinical tone, a trace of something close to excitement, as much as the usually reserved healer could muster.

"You sound almost glad to have found something new to study," Orion remarked, smirking.

Lysander gave a slight smile, the corners of his mouth twitching upwards. "Perhaps I am. I have spent my days tending wounds and cutting out infections. But this is different. A mystery. A challenge. And if I'm right, and we can figure out how to help her... well, that would be worth all the work."

Orion nodded. He wasn't saying anything yet but he doubted that he was going to let Sophia stay here especially if she was an unknown variable.

Orion nodded slowly. "So, what can be done?" His voice hardened. "This... amnesia, can it be undone?"

"Well, as far as I understand," Lysander began carefully, "in some cases, a person might regain lost memories by returning to familiar places, locations tied to strong emotions or important moments. The memories, buried though they may be, can sometimes be triggered, unlocking what was forgotten."

"That means... we take her back to where I found her." Orion's jaw clenched. "And hope her past reaches her."

Lysander frowned. "You found her in the shrine. I don't know if the shrine actually holds anything of importance to her."

Orion shrugged. "We'll never know until we try right?"

Lysander nodded. "Ans hope that this isn't going to bite us in the butt."

Orion said nothing more. His decision made, he turned sharply and marched back into the room where Sophia sat, the faintest tremble betraying her fear.

"Come." His voice was stern but held no cruelty.

Sophia met his gaze, confusion clouding her features. "What? Where are we going?"

Orion's eyes didn't waver. "Back to the shrine. It's the only place that might bring back your memory."

Lysander followed close behind, his practiced hands ready should Sophia need support.

Ronan was already there, sitting nearby, and his face filled with concern. "Orion," he said mildly. "What's this about?"

"Don't let him take me away." Sophia whispered, her hand darting out to grab Ronan's sleeve.

Ronan's brows lifted, and with a gentle voice, he steadied her. "Why? What's wrong?"

Sophia looked up with wide, pleading eyes. "Please, Ronan, don't let him kill me. Please."

Orion froze at the words, brows drawn together in disbelief. "Kill you? Where in the name of the Moon Goddess did you get that idea?"

Ronan chuckled softly, shaking his head. "Maybe it's because of the way you look right now. You do look like a man ready for battle." His grin brought a quick glare from Orion.

Sophia's gaze never left Ronan. "Is he... going to kill me?"

Orion smiled cruelly. He enjoyed the way she reacted to him.

"I am. But I'll feed you first so you have some fat on you then I'll roast you slowly over a pit..."

"Orion." Lysander growled out.

Orion released an irritating sound. "If I wanted to kill you," he told Sophia. "I would have done that even before these guys came in here."

"Doesn't mean you can't do it now." She told him.

Orion chuckled darkly before closing the distance between them. "You should know though, you don't spite your killer especially if you want to survive."

"Orion." Lysander growled out again.

Sophia was two seconds away from burrowing into Ronan's dress. Orion derived joy from seeing her that way. She had a sharp mouth but was still scared of him. But he knew he had to stop taunting her.

"No. I'm not going to hurt you. I'm taking you back to the place where I found you. That's all. Maybe you'll remember something." He told her.

A long silence filled the room, broken only by the creak of the wooden chair beneath Sophia. Then, softly, she whispered, "Oh..."

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 14: Brynhild - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 14: Brynhild](#)

Chapter 13

The heavy wooden door to the room creaked open, and a woman stepped inside without acknowledging anyone. Her movements were confident, purposeful, like she owned the space despite the hushed air filled with tension.

Lysander's sharp breath caught as he straightened up, the weight of her presence unmistakable. "Brynhild," he said quietly but with unmistakable relief, eyes flicking nervously between her and the others.

Sophia's gaze shifted to the newcomer, Brynhild. Even through the dim light, she was breathtaking. Her dark brown skin contrasted beautifully with the thick braids that framed her face, some strands pulled up into a tight knot while the rest cascaded down her back. Interwoven among the thick braids were colorful feathers and bits of cloth, subtle ornaments speaking of tradition and status.

Sophia's eyes couldn't help but wander lower, where Brynhild's pregnancy was unmistakable, a large, rounded bulge beneath her leather coat. She didn't dare speak of it, though, only wondering quietly how Brynhild moved with such grace despite the obvious weight she carried.

Brynhild's silver eyes, pale and almost luminous, swept the room with quiet authority, resting briefly on Sophia, though without a word of introduction. Sophia noticed the long, jagged scar running from just below Brynhild's left eye down her cheek, a mark that seemed less a flaw and more a testament to battles fought and survived.

Without glancing at anyone else, Brynhild's gaze immediately locked with Lysander's. Her tone was calm but demanding. "Why am I only just hearing now that she's awake? And that you let me sleep for so long?"

Lysander shifted under the weight of her stare, clearing his throat as he prepared to answer. "You needed the rest," he said simply.

Brynhild's lips pressed tightly together. "That's the only excuse you have?" She asked him.

Her sharpness did not go unnoticed by Ronan, who was seated nearby. His easy grin took over his face. If there was one person that could make Lysander cower, it was his wife.

"Really? But Lysander said you were already awake when he was asked." Ronan said.

Lysander glared at him, willing him to shut up but Ronan ignored him, his eyes dancing with mirth. Lysander was not getting out of this one.

Brynhild turned slowly toward her husband, who lowered his gaze as if avoiding the intensity of her question. Her silver eyes narrowed.

"Really? You lied to them?" She asked him.

"Baby..."

"Lysander, you don't need to treat me like an egg just because I'm pregnant." She said to him,

"It's the last trimester. You need to be careful."

"I've been careful for six whole fucking months with you breathing down my back. The seventh shouldn't be that special."

Lysander's voice softened, but he kept his serious expression. "It's my duty to make sure you're safe. You're strong, Brynhild, but there's much at stake."

She shook her head, the remnants of a smile barely touching her lips. "I still feel fine, and you can stop treating me like a frail child."

Sophia watched them both, struck anew by how different they were physically. Lysander was tall and broad, muscles rippling beneath his worn tunic; his stature commanded respect without effort. Brynhild, in contrast, was lean and muscular but small, lithe, more like a dancer than a warrior, but with a lethal aura that might surprise anyone who underestimated her. Her two swords rested at her sides, each sheathed and cleverly hidden beneath her cloak.

As Brynhild finished speaking, she pulled her cloak tighter around her, the fabric falling smoothly over the hilts of her weapons, masking their presence.

Orion, who had been watching the exchange silently, spoke finally. "Brynhild, you're coming with us."

Without hesitation or protest, she nodded. "I'm ready."

"Wait," Ronan spoke up. "That's it?"

"What?" Brynhild asked him.

"You are just going to let it go?" He asked her.

"We'll settle it alone and without your nosy self." She said to him,

Ronan groaned in pain, while Orion fought a smile.

Sophia felt an odd mixture of awe and curiosity. Brynhild's voice, when she now spoke in a calm, low tone, seemed to wrap around her like the warmth of a hearthfire. It was soothing, rich with quiet strength, the kind of voice that made you listen even before realizing what you were hearing.

Orion, reading the unspoken questions in Sophia's eyes, gestured to her. "Put this cloak on." With no more explanation, he removed the heavy black cloak from over his shoulders and draped it around Sophia.

She shivered as the rough fabric slid over bare skin but was suddenly enveloped in warmth, not just from the wool, but from the scent. Earthy, smoky, and uniquely his; the scent pulled at her senses and, despite herself, a small part of her wanted to lose herself in it. It was comforting in a way she despised yet needed. She fought the temptation to breathe it in deeply, to hide in the familiar smell and forget the cold, the doubt, the emptiness.

Brynhild watched quietly, a subtle smile on her lips, as Sophia adjusted the cloak around her. "Better," she said simply.

The four of them moved out through the heavy doors and into the snowy morning. The air was crisp, biting at exposed skin, the faint sun veiled by thick clouds. The snow-covered trees stretched around the path like silent guardians.

As they walked, Brynhild continued speaking softly to Sophia. "I'm captain of the guards here. It's my responsibility to keep everyone safe. And I'm sure you already know my name since my big mouthed husband said it."

Sophia glanced up at her, caught between admiration and shyness. The woman's presence was calming, commanding respect without a word of command.

"Yes. But a woman is captain of the guards?" Sophia asked curiously.

"What? I look too weak?" Brynhild asked her.

Sophia laughed. "Weak?" She pointed at Orion. "Now that's weak, not you."

Brynhild chuckled at that. They walked together until they reached the shrine.

Before them, the Moon Goddess's shrine rose in pale stone, its surface glowing faintly in the weak sunlight. The structure was elegant and ancient, the smooth, curved walls etched with faded carvings telling stories older than memory. Around the shrine's base, vibrant flowers bloomed despite the cold, their petals dusted by delicate frost.

Sophia inhaled sharply. The sheer beauty of the place caught her whole attention. Stones worn smooth by centuries, arches rising like whispers toward the sky, and statues of women carved with serene faces that seemed to watch over everything with gentle grace.

The chill in the air deepened as if the shrine breathed with history, magic imbuing each crack and curve. It was a place both timeless and filled with quiet power.

Sophia continued to take in the beauty of the shrine and it wasn't until Orion spoke up that she remembered there was a reason why she was here in the first place.

"So?" Orion asked her, his deep voice reaching her.

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[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 15: Trying to remember -
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Chapter 14

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"So?" Orion asked her, his deep voice reaching her.

Sophia's breath caught as the silence stretched between her and Orion. Her eyes remained fixed on the pale stone of the shrine, swirling with frost and mystery. Then, with a tentative turning of her head, she finally spoke.

"What do you mean?" she asked, voice soft but earnest.

Orion's dark gaze flicked up to meet hers. He swept a rough hand toward the towering walls around them. "We're here. At the shrine," he said flatly, as if stating the obvious.

Sophia blinked, her gaze sweeping the structure once more. "I can... see that," she answered uncertainly. "It looks beautiful, I suppose... but I'm not quite sure what we're really doing here."

Orion's eyes narrowed sharply, displeasure bristling like a surge of cold wind biting through winter leaves. "Are you dumb? Or just playing dumb with me?" His voice lowered but sharpened. "Have you forgotten the very reason we're here? This is where I found you."

Her eyes widened as it dawned on her. "Oh."

"Yeah, oh."

"Um..."

"Can you just fucking tell me if you remember anything?" Orion asked in anger.

His eyes narrowed at him before taking a deep breath. "No," she stammered, voice barely audible. "No, I haven't forgotten. But... this place doesn't ring a bell. Nothing familiar."

Even with how defiant she seemed, she was also soft and she hated that even being back here did nothing to rid the fog in her brain.

Orion let out a ragged breath, his shoulders stiffening in irritation. "I don't care how you do it but you better check that little brain of yours to see if you remember anything." The words were sharp, laced with frustration.

Sophia's defiance flared again despite the unease knotting in her stomach. "I already told you," she said firmly, eyes flashing. "It doesn't ring a bell."

"I found you here." Orion pointed out.

"Well, thank you for that."

"How do you not remember anything then?" He asked her, brows furrowed in anger.

"Maybe because you are lying? Maybe this isn't where you found me?" She asked him with a raised eyebrow.

Sophia hated that nothing rang a bell in her brain but she wasn't going to just let Orion walk over her.

"I don't lie." Orion grounded out and she shrugged.

She didn't care if he did so or not.

She grew silent for a moment, the cold pressing in, as she observed the beautiful shrine. She turned toward Brynhild standing nearby with quiet patience, the silver of her eyes calm as moonlight.

With renewed curiosity, Sophia began to ask, "What is this place? When was this shrine built? Who built it? Is it important? It does look important though. What stones were used? Why are they pale? Why is there this hum beneath? It feels fucking magical, you know."

Brynhild chuckled. "Slow down tiger."

She took a breath before answering, her voice steady and low. "This shrine is very old. Older than any of us can say. No one knows exactly who built it. It simply was when our pack came here, many years ago, to Nirvana."

Sophia frowned slightly but pressed on. "Why was it built? What's it for?"

Brynhild's pale eyes softened. "We don't know that. It's said the Moon Goddess herself blessed this place. According to stories which let me tell you, there are a lot, it's where peace once lived, among families and tribes united. Some say it's a place she resided in while some others claim that it's connected directly to her. Some say it's a scam because obviously the moon goddess never walked this earth..."

"She did." Sophia said, interrupting her.

Brynhild chuckled. "Well some people say she did."

Before Brynhild could add more, Orion's temper which was already simmering boiled over. He strode forward, muscles tense, and without warning, scooped Sophia up over one broad shoulder in a smooth motion.

Sophia's startled scream pierced the cold air. "What are you doing? Put me down! You rogue! Beast! You insane fool! Get me off!" Her fists pounded against his back as color drained from her face.

Orion said nothing, simply marched with deliberate steps toward the pack's grounds, each stride measured and purposeful. Her protests grew louder, more desperate, but he ignored them all.

The cold air stung freshly as they emerged inside the gates, the familiar stone walls offering no comfort.

Orion reached his quarters and set her down roughly on the floor. "Stay still," he ordered, voice a low growl that brooked no defiance.

Sophia winced, clutching her side, but met his glare squarely, refusing to be cowed. She bit the inside of her cheek, fighting tears and the panic rising within her.

Orion turned sharply and called after him, just as Ronan and Brynhild were bursting through the door behind him.

"Ronan, Brynhild," Orion barked, "we're holding an impromptu meeting."

"What are you doing?" Brynhild asked him with a frown.

"Gather the elders. This isn't any of your concern. Place some guards around to make sure she doesn't get out." Orion said to her.

Brynhild was still shocked from his actions but spoke up, "The elders are already gathered. You won't find a more eager audience."

Orion's lips curled into a dry smirk. "Good."

Orion should have expected that. It was a wonder how he was able to go hours without the elders demanding him to show up.

He pushed open the heavy oak door of the council chamber without hesitation, and all eyes turned to him.

The elders sat in quiet judgment: Eldric, adjusting his thick glasses and twitching fingers nervously, Caspian, sly-eyed with a faint smirk, Daniel, his eyes sharp and wary, Madam Tyler, serene yet formidable, hands folded as if in prayer, and Tobias, ever weighing and measuring, his gaze sharp and calculating.

Orion ignored greetings and pleasantries. His voice cut deep through the heavy air.

"What do we do about this nuisance?"

The question hung raw and cold, a blade in the silence. All eyes fixed on the center where he stood, unmoving, waiting.

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[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 16: What if she's a threat?](#)

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Chapter 15

The council hall was thick with silence, the kind that weighed on bones and settled into every corner. Outside, the wind had picked up, but inside, the heavy stone walls absorbed even the faintest breath. The assembled elders sat in their usual places, Eldric adjusting his glasses, Caspian with a faint smile curved like a secret, Daniel rigid but alert, Madam Tyler serene yet sharp-eyed, Tobias drumming his fingers thoughtfully, and the late-arriving Mary slipping quietly into her seat near the back.

The heavy oak door groaned once, announcing footsteps that drew every gaze. Mary entered, eyes apologetic but steady. Behind her came Lysander, his posture tense but controlled. Brynhild followed, moving with a quiet grace despite the rounded curve of her pregnancy.

"Apologies for being late," Mary said, her voice clear as she settled into the circle, shooting Tobias a glance.

Tobias snorted softly, a sound half amusement, half protest. Mary's gaze pinned him instantly, sharp and unyielding, and he quickly averted his eyes, feigning disinterest.

Orion stood near the center, crossing his arms. His dark gaze swept the room once more before he forced the silence further with his voice.

"What do we do about this nuisance?"

Madam Tyler's serene eyes flickered with mild confusion, her fingers still folded in that constant gesture of prayer. "What do you mean, Orion?" she asked quietly.

He stepped forward, voice firm and carrying. "The woman. Sophia. She claims not to remember anything."

Eldric blinked, adjusting the thick lenses of his spectacles. "Claims? Does that mean she is lying?"

Orion shook his head slowly. "I never felt anything remotely close to a lie from her."

Daniel's brows narrowed sharply. "Then why do you ask the question? If she isn't lying, what is the problem?"

Orion exhaled sharply, annoyed even by the question. "Because I don't think she is lying. At least I know she is not."

There was just something about Sophia that unnerved him. He couldn't quite place it. He could lie and say it was because of how she challenged him but he knew that wasn't the case because a part of him liked the fact that she was able to challenge him, to push him. And it was some sucked fucked up pleasure.

There was also the fact that the voice he had heard when he had first brought her back to the pack was nowhere. It was like it was gone.

The council shifted uneasily. Tobias's fingers stilled on the table, gaze sharpening. "Explain then, what is the situation?"

Orion turned to Lysander who gave him a nod.

Lysander stepped forward, taking a steady breath. "The woman's condition is complex. As I explained to Orion before, it resembles a condition I've read about, amnesia. Memory loss so deep that she cannot recall her past, her identity, origins, or ties to anyone or anything."

He paused, noticing the varying reactions. "Such conditions are rare, almost unheard of. The cause isn't clear and we have very little knowledge regarding this condition."

Caspian's dry chuckle cut through the tension. "So you say she's forgetful. Big deal. This isn't the first time the pack's had trouble with someone broken in the head."

Madam Tyler's gaze was steady, but even she allowed a slight frown. "It may not be the first case, but surely it is serious enough to warrant this discussion."

"This feels awfully like that condition that old cow has." Caspian said with a laugh.

Lysander spoke up then. "This is different."

Orion's expression darkened. "She does not know who she is. She could be anything. Our friend or enemy, weapon or victim."

He glanced sharply at everyone, voice lowering. "What if she recovers her memory and she is the enemy? And besides, who knows if she has some talent to bypass my ability?"

Daniel harrumphed, shaking his head. "You do know that is unlikely. We have all studied the limits of these gifts and curses. She cannot bypass your ability if you are right about it."

Orion's gaze flicked coldly toward him. "Are you certain?"

Caspian spoke up then, "Oh, come now, Orion. None of us are that naive. But the truth is, powers such as yours possess limits, and we live with that uncertainty always."

Ronan leaned forward from where he sat, eyes gleaming with slow amusement. His voice was quiet but harsh with meaning. "So, Orion... What do you intend to do with her? You've made up your mind already, haven't you?"

Orion did not respond immediately. Then, voice resolute, he answered. "She's being sent out."

"Why?" Eldric asked him.

"We don't know if she'll be a threat to us or not."

Brynhild's voice was unexpectedly soft but firm as she spoke. "That seems reasonable. But I do not believe she has the bone in her to hurt anyone."

Orion's eyes flashed fiercely. "The most innocent tend to be the most dangerous and you of all people should know that."

Brynhild's silver eyes held quiet defiance. "Perhaps. But if she is a threat, wouldn't it be better to keep her within the pack's watchful eyes? Especially if she is a spy or something worse."

Orion shook his head, irritation rising like wildfire. "I cannot risk it. No one will be harmed because of what she might do or is unaware of."

The council was silent again, but Daniel observed Orion quietly, his expression unreadable.

Daniel's voice finally cut through the stillness, slow and deliberate. "I suspect your heart lies in protecting yourself more than the pack at this point, Orion."

Orion's jaw tightened, but he said nothing. Caspian, leaning back in his chair, studied him with calculating eyes.

Then Orion straightened and said with authority, "Tobias, when you leave for your next trade or business journey, take her with you. Drop her somewhere she can find her own way."

He shot a sharp glance around the room. "No discussion."

Tobias's lips twitched but he nodded in understanding.

Orion turned and strode toward the exit without a backward glance.

Behind him, the low murmur of voices rose slowly, questions, protests, worries, yet none dared call him back.

The council chamber remained thick with silence once more.

Outside, the wind carried the weight of uncertain futures and unspoken fears.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 17: Sending her away - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 17: Sending her away](#)

Chapter 16

The heavy oak door to the council hall slammed shut behind Orion as he walked out. The tense silence lingered, but it was broken by the swift, sharp footsteps of Brynhild as she spun on her heel and stormed after him, her cloak billowing behind her like a dark flag in the bitter wind.

The frosty air bit at her skin, but she barely noticed. Her heart pounded with frustration and something fiercer, perhaps anger for the pack's sake. She caught up to Orion just as he was about to vanish toward the quarters carved out near the edge of the compound.

"Orion!" her voice sliced through the cold. She didn't wait for him to turn. "What the bloody hell do you think you're doing, sending her away like some damned plague?"

Orion paused, his broad silhouette tense against the waning daylight. His voice was low but firm, edged with cold resolve. "I'm protecting the pack. That's what I'm doing. Nothing more."

Brynhild stepped closer, silver eyes flashing, her breath fogging in the air between them. "Have you lost your mind? Protecting the pack by throwing away someone who doesn't even have a clue about who she is? How does that make any damned sense? She's harmless, you know that." Her words tumbled out, rough and raw like jagged stones scraping skin.

Orion didn't flinch. His voice grew sharper, frustration simmering beneath every syllable. "I don't know that, what I do know is that she could be more dangerous than any of us want to admit."

Brynhild barked a harsh laugh. "Haven't you ever heard the saying 'Keep your friends close and your enemies closer'?"

He looked at her, eyes narrowing dangerously, voice dripping with coldness. "And there's also the saying that if you don't keep your enemies at arms length it'll come to bite you in the butt."

Brynhild blinked. "There's no saying like that."

"Of course there isn't. I'm just trying to protect the pack and you are obviously telling me I'm wrong, which I don't get because Sophia isn't your lost twin sister that you're desperate to protect."

The knife in his words landed hard and deep. For a heartbeat, Brynhild's expression faltered. Her mouth tightened, and she swallowed, the sharp words catching like a bitter stone in her throat.

Then, regaining her composure with a defiant lift of her chin, she spat back, "Go fuck yourself, Orion. I'm not doing this because she reminds me of anyone."

"Then explain why."

"Fine. You want a fucking reason? Fine, then know this, I'm not replacing my twin, and if you think this is about her, you're damn wrong. I can't replace my sister. This fucking scar reminds me of that bloody night and I know I can't fucking replace her you idiot but at least I know that but you," she pointed at him. "You're not protecting the pack. You are protecting yourself because you're fucking scared."

Orion's jaw clenched, nostrils flaring. "I'm protecting more than myself. I'm protecting this entire pack."

Breathing heavily, Brynhild stepped closer until the space between them was charged, tense, like the calm before a storm. "Then ask yourself what would you do if she wasn't a threat? What if she's innocent, lost but harmless? And you send her away, cast her out... and that death, that ruin, will be on your hands."

Orion scoffed, shaking his head with a bitter edge. "She won't die. Tobias will drop her off somewhere safe, somewhere she can find her own way if she's clever enough."

Brynhild's gaze sharpened, her voice hardening into a warning. "That's the dumbest thing I've heard all night. You'll regret this. I'm telling you now."

Without waiting for a reply, she spun away, her boots pounding against the hard-packed earth as she disappeared into the chill night, leaving Orion alone with the wind's cold howl.

Orion released a low, irritated sigh, the weight of the argument twisting in his gut like a knot of fire and ice. The night felt colder than the day had been. He turned, muscles

tight, and made his way to his room where Sophia sat quietly, wrapped in the thick cloak he'd thrown around her earlier.

His footsteps echoed heavily as he entered. She looked up, confusion clouding her face.

"You're leaving first thing tomorrow morning. Tobias will be here to take you," he said without preamble.

She blinked, mouth opening to ask who Tobias was, but before she could speak, he turned and strode out, leaving the question dying before she could even speak it out.

Sophia grumbled and tried to go after him but slipped on her own feet.

"Ugh!" She groaned as she adjusted. Luckily for her, she had fallen face flat on the bed which cushioned her fall.

"You're leaving first thing tomorrow morning. Tobias will be here to take you," she mocked Orion's words as she adjusted on the bed. "I don't know anyone named Tobias and where the fuck was I even going? Fuck you, you big oaf." She grumbled.

Alone, she wrapped Orion's cloak around her body tighter. There was a fire to keep her warm but she wasn't used to the cold. She took in the room where she was. She noticed how Orion's scent was more intense in this room. It was overpowering but she didn't hate it. Instead, she liked it and that was saying a lot because she didn't like the person in topic.

She was going to stay in the room until he came back and then he was going to explain what he meant by her leaving because as far as she knew, she wasn't going anywhere yet. At least she had no intention of leaving yet.

Meanwhile, after Orion delivered his message, he made his way back to the spit where everything had started two months ago, to the gnarled old tree where he had first found the mysterious woman. His boots pressed deep into the hard earth, and the cold bit all the more sharply beneath the blanket of night.

He stopped beneath the twisted branches, their silhouettes stark against the dark sky. His voice barely rose, rough and ragged.

"Give me a sign. Let me know this is right."

Hours passed, the moon rising high before the first faint hint of dawn. Yet, no sign came. Only the whisper of the wind through the bare limbs.

"Are you going to tell me if I should let her stay or not?" He asked aloud but there was still no answer.

"At least show yourself! You were here months ago and now you're not? Especially when the woman you told me to help may be in danger?" He asked but there was still nothing.

"I thought you heard the voice in the shrine?" Noctis asked him.

Orion made a grumbling sound and trekked towards the shrine, repeating the same process, hoping for even a little sign but he got nothing.

Orion's irritation deepened, darkening into restless worry. He clenched his fists but said nothing more and walked out of the shrine.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 18: Tobias - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 18: Tobias](#)

Chapter 17: Tobias

The dawn light sifted faintly through the curtains of the room where Sophia was currently in. She lay curled beneath the heavy cloak he had thrown over her shoulders the night before, the folds of fabric dampening the chill that seeped through the cracked windowpane. The fire in the hearth had long since faded to ashes and she was hit with how cold the room was.

She stared at the ceiling before rubbing at her eyes as if trying to quell the remnants of sleep. She took in the room, Orion wasn't present. She was the only one in the room.

She had tried to stay awake the previous night, waiting until he came back so he could explain that he meant by her leaving and also tell her who the fuck Tobias was. The only people she knew were Brynhild, Lysander the grumpy doctor, Ronan the funny one and Orion the annoying one. And he really was annoying. She disliked him a lot. Why couldn't he be like the others or be as likeable as Brynhild?

She groaned low in frustration and slammed a fist into the wall beside the bed. Her cheek flushed with heat and pain. "Fucking brick wall," she muttered bitterly, eyes narrowing at a crack in the wood.

The faint creak of the door made her whip her head toward it. Her pulse quickened at the faint hope it might be him, finally coming back to talk. She could see herself giving him an attitude as he tried to explain what he had meant but she wouldn't give him the time of the day or the attention. She was going to treat him the same way he had treated her. But it wasn't Orion who stepped in, it was Brynhild.

She moved quietly, her heavy cloak rustling softly as she crossed the room. Her expression was unreadable, her eyes were bland, at least they looked bland to Sophia but there was a tension around her shoulders. She carried a bundle of supplies wearing no trace of warmth or softness in her demeanor.

Sophia remained silent and Brynhild's presence alone seemed to fill the room with unspoken authority. She prepared a bath for Sophia and gave her a change of clothes.

Without a word, Brynhild set the bundle she had carried carefully on the floor and began unpacking, thick, woolen clothes stitched with subtle lines of silver thread, a sturdy leather satchel filled with dried fruits, cured meats, and fresh-smelling bread; waterskin tied with leather straps and a small, tightly wrapped cloth containing a few useful herbs and salves.

Sophia watched quietly, suspicious of the woman's silence and sharpened gaze.

Brynhild glanced over once, the faintest flicker of annoyance passing through her pale eyes, but said nothing.

Time stretched tense between them. The only sounds were the soft clinks of packing and the distant wind brushing against the wooden walls.

Finally, Brynhild slung the satchel over her shoulder, the weight settling heavily. She gestured toward the door without meeting Sophia's gaze. "We should leave soon. Tobias will be waiting."

Sophia stood stiffly, her muscles tight beneath the soft cloak she put on after changing. She hesitated though still not comprehending what was going on.

"Who?" she asked quietly.

But Brynhild said nothing.

Exasperated and feeling increasingly abandoned, Sophia sighed and followed her out of the room.

The compound was still mostly quiet, with the few awake residents keeping to their routines, yet a small undercurrent of curiosity flowed beneath the muted voices and curious stares.

They reached the heavy main gate where a young man stood waiting, leaning casually against the stone wall. His dark hair was tousled in that carelessly charming way that bore just the hint of defiance, careless like he did not owe the world any explanations.

He looked young around twenty one or twenty two. His lean frame was clad in a snug leather jacket, worn but well cared for, the sleeves rolled up to reveal long forearms

crossed nonchalantly like the biting cold didn't faze him. His skin was a warm bronze, kissed by the sun, a sharp contrast to the pale frost lingering on the ground.

He wore earrings on each ear, attached to beautiful silver like feathers. They each had their own designs and it resembled the feathers that were woven through Brynhild's hair but each a different colour. His dark eyes watched her every move and he looked like he was aware of everything that was happening in the compound right now.

He straightened when Brynhild and Sophia approached, pushing off from the wall and stepping forward with a friendly grin.

"You must be Sophia," he said smoothly, voice low and warm but with an edge of steel that pulled taut the air between them. "Tobias."

Sophia blinked, startled by the ease of his introduction. "Yeah. That's me. And you're...? I'm not exactly sure what's going on."

Tobias chuckled lightly. "I'll be taking you out. Away from here."

"Why?" she demanded, folding her arms. "And where the fuck is away from here?"

Before Tobias could answer, a shadow moved silently behind her, and a cold, sharp voice cut through the morning light.

"Exactly what it means, away from here."

Sophia whirled around, eyes wide as she realized she never heard him approach and from the look on Tobias' face, neither had he even if Sophia was sure he had been paying attention to everything happening in the compound.

Orion stood just a few paces away, his intense gaze locked on hers.

She opened her mouth to argue, to demand answers, but the words stumbled and fell.

"I...I don't understand."

"We are or rather Tobias is taking you back to where you can from." Orion told her.

"But I don't know where I came from," she said bluntly, "so how the hell can I go back there?"

Orion's dark eyes hardened, unmoved by her protests.

"It doesn't matter," he said, voice flat as a blade. "You have to go."

The way he dismissed her words, the way he refused to even acknowledge her questions or her existence as more than a problem, it ignited a spark of fury within her.

"You really are a brick wall aren't you? And idiotic stubborn mule and even worse. I just told you I don't even remember where I come from and you insist on me leaving. To go where?" Her voice rose slightly, catching Tobias' attention.

Tobias let out a short, amused laugh but with a glare from Orion he covered it with a cough.

"Anywhere except here." Orion said to her.

"Do you perhaps have a place I can stay then? In the place you are sending me to." She asked him.

"I'm not sending you anywhere. I'm letting you go so you can find your way." Orion argued.

Sophia glared at him. She imagined throwing a stone at him or just unscrewing his brain so she could see what the hell was going on inside it. But then was there any reason to not leave this place? There really wasn't. She wasn't from here, Orion had made that clear but there was this undercurrent of fear in her bones at leaving the walls of this place. But she also knew she couldn't stay in a place where she wasn't welcomed. There was no point fighting to stay here.

As if Orion had read her thoughts, without a word, he pivoted away, his long strides taking him back toward the center of the compound, leaving Sophia with her thoughts.

Brynhild stepped forward with a soft sigh.

"I apologize for his manner," she said softly, "He's... complicated."

Sophia scoffed. "Complicated? More like an idiot."

Brynhild smiled at her.

"I really can't stay?" Sophia asked her with pleading eyes. "I'll do anything you guys want. I'll stay just a little bit." She begged.

Brynhild's face softened, and though her hands were steady, her body language screamed helplessness and regret.

"I wish I could say yes," she said gently. "But it's not within my power."

Before Sophia could press for more, Brynhild pulled her into a brief, warm embrace. The scent of leather and musk surrounded her, familiar and oddly comforting.

She pulled back just enough to meet Sophia's eyes.

"I packed food, warm clothes, and water for the journey," Brynhild said quietly, voice tender but firm. "Take care of yourself. I hope our paths cross again."

The weight of her words settled heavy in Sophia's chest, mingling with the cold morning air.

Tobias stepped forward, slinging the leather satchel over his shoulder.

"Come on," he said, voice rough but inviting. "We don't have much time left. I only have a few hours to make it where I need to go."

Sophia hesitated, eyes darting between Brynhild's pale silver gaze and Tobias's dark eyes.

Without another word, she followed, footsteps echoing uncertainly on the stone path.

The path outside the pack's grounds was barren and gray beneath an overcast sky. The chill seeped deep, nipping at exposed skin, but Sophia felt too restless to notice much beyond the raw truth of her situation.

Her mind spun with questions, tangled memories and dizzying gaps; every step forward felt like walking blind, fumbling for a vanished self.

Tobias kept a steady pace beside her, silently. He led her towards a huge carriage that was attached to four huge black beasts. They growled and Sophia jumped, staring at Tobias with wide eyes.

"You said you were escorting me but this looks like you are feeding me to wolves." She said to him,

Tobias laughed. "They are wolves but I'm not feeding you to them."

He jumped on the carriage and extended his hands to her, which she took after much debate.

"If I die, I'll hunt Orion."

Tobias turned to her and threw his head back laughing loudly.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 19: lost - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 19: lost

Chapter 18:lost

The heavy carriage groaned softly as it rolled onwards, the large wooden wheels crunching over the uneven dirt road. The reins in Tobias's hands pulled taut, guiding the four powerful black beasts that pulled the massive vehicle through the fading daylight. Inside, the scent of leather, herbs, and faint woodsmoke mingled with the chill that crept in through the cracks in the carriage's walls.

Sophia sat beside Tobias on the worn bench, the thick fabric of her cloak still wrapped tightly around her. The satchel with the provisions sat at her feet, untouched, though her fingers often glanced toward it as if it held answers she couldn't yet reach.

She looked sideways at Tobias, who seemed oddly comfortable and relaxed, a stark contrast to the weight pressing on her chest. His dark eyes held a constant sparkle, and there was nearly always a half-smile tugging at the corners of his mouth, like he knew a secret joke no one else did.

"So," Sophia finally said, breaking the silence. "I gotta say, you seem pretty easy-going for a guy tasked with dragging along unwanted refugees."

Tobias chuckled low, "Unwanted refugees? I don't seem to be dragging any along with me." He told her.

"Hello? The show fits me." Sophia said, pointing at herself which made Tobias laugh again.

"I like your humour," He said to her. "It is sharp and a little wild. It's refreshing." He glanced at her with genuine warmth. "It's not often I meet someone with humour like yours."

Sophia raised an eyebrow. "Well, don't get used to it. Not everyone appreciates my brand of humor." Her eyes darkened with bitter amusement. "Especially not one particular brick wall who just sent me packing."

Tobias's smile softened. "I imagine not. I can only guess that Alpha Orion has his reasons, good or bad. Whether you like it or not." He shrugged in a way that suggested acceptance of complex truths.

Sophia sighed, leaning her head back against the carriage wall, eyes catching the darkening sky beyond the small window slats. "You're probably right. But it's hard not to feel like shit about it, you know? Getting told to leave like you're some rotting piece of

meat." She kicked the seat lightly. "I'm not exactly a princess, but shouldn't someone around here try to help me figure this shit out instead of just shoving me out the door?"

Tobias gave a small, thoughtful nod. "It's complicated. I won't pretend to understand all of it. But you'll find that pack life isn't always about kindness. Sometimes it's about survival and tough choices. And like I said, I'm sure Alpha Orion has his reasons."

Sophia blew out a breath, trying to swallow the lump in her throat. "I'm getting the impression you're the practical type. Do you always see the world through cold pragmatism?"

Tobias shrugged, eyes gleaming. "Maybe. Or maybe I just know when a fight's been lost before you even draw your sword."

A silence fell between them, weighted but not uncomfortable.

After several miles, Sophia's curiosity finally got the better of her again.

"So... what's with all the stuff in this huge carriage?" she asked, nodding toward the crates and boxes stacked behind them. "Weapons? Books? Jewelry? Are you running a traveling market or something?"

Tobias grinned, eyes twinkling with mystery. "Now that's a secret I'm not ready to share."

"Even if I offer you money?" She asked him.

"You don't have any money to give me though." Tobias pointed out.

"How are you so sure that I don't?"

"That's because I know you don't, or do you?" He asked her with a raised eyebrow.

"Well, no."

"There you have it. My secret remains untold."

Sophia huffed a scoff, crossing her arms. "You make it seem like you are carrying around the world's best-kept secret like a walking vault."

Tobias smiled at her, "Maybe, but you'll never know though."

The road stretched on, the sun dipping lower and painting the sky in shades of orange and bruised purple. Outside, the landscape rolled in muted tones of brown and gray, fields giving way to tangled woods as the cold deepened.

Hours slipped by in steady motion, the rhythmic clatter of wheels and growls from the beasts the only consistent sounds.

At last, Tobias slowed the carriage until it came to a halt at a fork in the road. He gestured expansively.

"This is where I leave you," he said, voice quiet but firm. "See there? That's the main road south." He pointed left, a broad dirt track running toward shadowed hills. "West runs through those woods over there. East cuts around the mountains. Any of those will take you somewhere."

Sophia leaned forward, peering at the landscape. But her eyes narrowed in confusion, despite the explanations, the paths blurred altogether, twisting away into jagged triangles of unknowns. She had no idea how Tobias was even able to tell which was which. Everything looked the same to her.

"Which way are you going?" he asked her.

She shook her head. "I don't know which way to go. Don't even know where I should go."

Tobias shrugged, leaning a little closer, lowering his voice. "Tell me where you want to be, and I'll help you figure it out."

Sophia bit her lip, hesitating. She should really have an idea on where to go but no one called to her. Instead she felt a dread curl up her stomach just looking at the vast expanse Tobias had pointed out. She didn't feel this dread when she had been in Orion's pack.

"I can't," she finally said, voice cracking slightly. "I don't know where I'm from, or anything. I've got no idea where that road should lead."

Tobias's grin wavered fractionally but his voice was steady. "Well," he said, "we'll just have to figure that out, won't we?"

Her eyes darted to him, "what do you mean?"

"I can help you, just until you get to a safe place." He told her.

She rejoiced at his words but then remembered when he had told her he only had a few hours to get to where he was headed.

"But you have somewhere to be and you can't be late." She pointed out.

Tobias sighed. "Yes, but you seem like you don't know what you are meant to be doing around here so..."

She resigned with a shake of her head. "No worries. I'll figure this out myself. Who knows, maybe I'll meet someone who recognizes me." She told him.

He sighed, folding his hands in his lap. Then, from a small pocket inside his jacket, he pulled out a delicate silver necklace. Hanging from the chain was a tiny whistle, finely crafted, shining faintly even in the dusk.

"This is for you," Tobias said, holding it out. "Blow it if you get into trouble. It's enchanted to send a message straight to the pack leader. They'll come for you, no questions asked."

Sophia stared at it, her initial instinct to return the gesture overwhelming.

He shook his head firmly. "Keep it. I'm only going to be gone for three days. When I get back, I'll look for you. I want to know if you're okay."

She hesitated, then slipped the chain around her neck, the cold metal a strange comfort against her skin.

"Thanks," she murmured.

"I'm going now," he said, glancing at the horizon. "Take care of yourself, Sophia. I really hope I get to see you again."

She nodded, giving him a smile which he returned.

As he melded into the gathering dusk, Sophia felt the silent pulse of uncertainty growing.

The fork in the road loomed before her, a yawning choice with no map, no signpost to guide.

She looked down each path, south, west, east, all seemed equally strange and distant.

Then, almost without thinking, she chose none.

Instead, she followed the faint tracks Tobias had made, disappearing in a direction opposite from those he'd pointed out.

Hours passed as she trudged through the biting cold, her steps echoing in the barren stillness.

The snow began to fall, a gentle dusting at first, then steady and thick, blanketing the earth in soft white.

Her breath came in clouds, mixing with the sharp scent of pine and frost. She thought briefly of Tobias's homeland, with its damp, cold forests and harsh winters. The snow felt familiar somehow, almost as intense as theirs.

"I'll make sure to find you when I'm done you bastard brick headed individual. Sending me a way just because you can't stand me. It's not like I even did anything wrong to you." She muttered as she walked, cursing Orion with every word she could think of.

She kept walking, the stubbornness that had always defined her resisting the pull to retreat.

As darkness folded around the trees and the moon cast its pale glow, Sophia's footsteps slowed.

She turned abruptly, recognizing a massive rock she had passed earlier, its carved symbols stark in the silver light.

A wave of cold dread settled in her gut. She had passed here before.

"Am I lost?" She asked herself like someone would answer her.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

[The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 20: Sophia's End? - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 20: Sophia's End?](#)

Chapter 19

Sophia was officially lost.

She had walked in what felt like a giant, mocking circle for hours, stubbornly refusing to admit it at first. But as dusk turned the snow crust into ghostly blue and the frost pinched at her nose and fingertips, the truth couldn't be denied. She was back at that same ancient rock, a hulking thing with strange runes carved deep into its flank, glimmering in the darkness of the night.

She glared at it. "Seriously? You again?" she said as her body grew with irritation. But deep down, there was something more, like fear and uncertainty.

"Are you following me, you stupid chunk of stone?" When the rock stayed stubbornly silent, not even offering a glint of comfort, she gave it a swift kick, only to stub her toe.

"Ouch!" She turned to the rock with a glare "I hope you crack and fall down."

The wind started picking up, shadows swirling among the trees, and the cold became fierce, finding every gap in her clothes, crawling under her new wool layers. There was no path, no sign, and no hope of a cottage magically appearing out of the snow. And she was sure if she had magic she'd make it happen.

Sophia wrapped her cloak tighter and tried to scan the white, rolling world for shelter. Everything was either bone-chilling or bone-breaking, and neither of those options were looking better as the night hunched over the forest. The ground itself even looked hostile, all lumps and frozen ridges.

She kept moving, searching: maybe there would be a fallen tree, a hollow to hide in, a thicket or even a pile of dead branches she could pull over her head like some fairytale hermit. And when she survived and saw Orion another day, she'd boast that she was a fairy.

But nothing. The only thing she could see was just endless snow, a sky tightening with bruised purple clouds, and those sharp, cruel winds.

Eventually, even her stubborn pride caved and she circled back to the warmth radiating ever-so-slightly from the strange rune-carved rock. She pressed her back to it, and to her surprise, her shivers lessened a little bit. Whether it was sheltered from the wind or some weird magic, she didn't care. It was all she had.

She sank to the snow, knees curled, pulling her cloak around her and tucking her satchel close to her chest. Her breath fogged the air, and her limbs ached, but it was exhaustion as much as cold that finally dragged her down.

'At least if something tries to eat me, maybe this rock will do its job and protect me,' she thought grimly but she knew that was far-fetched. What could the rock do?

Sleep came in bits and pieces, broken by dreams of endless white and faceless shadows. She woke often, sometimes to the dead silence, sometimes to her own racing heart, other times to the faintest crackle of ice shifting, branches groaning under the weight of night, or far-off animal cries. Each time she woke, she'd curl in tighter, pressing her body as close to the rock as she dared.

Her body was used to being comfortable and this was just...she couldn't explain it with the word, 'discomfort.' Her back hurt. Her feet felt like blocks. Fear lived in her ribcage, sharp and bright as a splinter. The woods here didn't feel empty. They felt... predatory, and every muscle in her body tensed against the feeling of being watched.

Finally, as a dull, grey light oozed between the trees, barely dawn but enough to see, Sophia stirred fully awake, senses prickling with unease. The forest was dead silent, not even the wind dared rattling the branches now. That was wrong. In every way that mattered, it was wrong.

She listened, breath shallow, her heart thudding so loudly she was afraid it would give her away. Something was nearby. Something big.

A branch snapped, echoing too crisply through the clearing.

Sophia sat up fast. If there was one thing she was sure of, silence in the woods was never a good thing. The few animals that were awake hid, birds stopped calling, even the wind seemed to hold its breath when something dangerous was close. And whatever was moving out there, the woods themselves seemed to shrink away from it.

She forced herself to quietly, methodically pack up her scant belongings, every second her hands were steady, she whispered a plea to whatever powers might be listening.

The growl shattered the silence. It sounded like a wolf's growling but this wasn't like what she had heard from the wolves dragging Tobias' carriage. This was different. It was lower, deeper, and longer. The ground seemed to rumble with it, snow shivering loose from the lowest branches. Sophia froze, blood beating at her temples so loud she could barely hear anything else. The sound was wrong, too deep, too... hungry.

She stood, pressing her back to the warm stone, eyes wide and searching as something huge moved between the trees. It was there, just past the line of frozen pines, a shape impossibly white against the snow, hulking and powerful, thicker than the tree trunks around it.

It padded closer, massive paws silent on the frost, breath steaming in wide, swirling gusts. She could smell it before she even saw the details, something wild and musky, but behind that, the coppery reek of blood.

The beast was... not quite a bear. Larger, bulkier, its fur so white it almost shimmered with silver. Mounds of thick, oily hair protected a body built seemingly from slabs of muscle and primal hunger. Its snout was longer and more angular than any normal bear, with black lips peeling back to reveal fangs far too sharp, more wolf than bear. Its yellow eyes locked on Sophia's with an intelligence that made her legs threaten to fold beneath her.

Scarred ears twitched forward, and it gave another rolling, bone-juddering growl, pawing at the snow with claws longer than kitchen knives. There was a rawness to its hunger, a madness, a predator that'd spent too long hunting and now wasn't going to walk away from such easy prey.

Sophia couldn't breathe, couldn't move. She tried to swallow but her throat locked. Her whole body shrank with fear. Her eyes darted to her satchel, counting her provisions. Was there anything she could use to defend herself? She had gone through it but there was nothing except a small pocket knife which she knew was utterly useless against this beast.

What then?

The beast prowled closer and she was frozen in fear begging her legs to move. Then, she remembered the whistle hanging from her neck.

She had no idea if it would work. If it would even matter...

The beast stepped forward, slow and deliberate, as though savoring her terror. Its nostrils flared, tongue flickering over its lips, almost gleeful.

She yanked the satchel up, hands shaking. What should she do? Run. Or face it. Or beg for mercy. Or blow the whistle. Run! Move, now!

But her feet felt rooted, heavy. Her back pressed so hard to the rock that she half-wished it would swallow her up, do something, please, give me even a fighting chance.

The beast lunged, powerful shoulders bunching and bursting forward, teeth bared so wide Sophia could see the dark pit of its mouth. She barely dodged, throwing herself into the snow as the monstrous paw swiped past her, claws raking sparks from the rune-marked stone.

She hit the ground hard, rolling, gasping, cold air burning in her lungs.

The creature's roar shook the trees. Now it stalked her slowly, each step crunching the snow, its yellow eyes locked unblinking on hers.

Sophia scrambled up, mittens slipping, hands so numb she barely felt the whistle in her fist.

The beast sprang faster than she thought it could move, jaws snapping for her face.

She screamed.

And as the massive shadow reared over her, hunger blazing in its eyes, something crackled in the air, old magic, or the memory of a dream, or maybe it was just a trick of the cold.

She blew the whistle.

She didn't hear any sound from it so she blew it again but still nothing.

The creature howled, a ragged sound of fury.

This was it. She had no idea what she was going to do. She picked up the first thing her hand touched holding it against the beast when suddenly, like it was a movie, everything took a turn.

Maybe this was her end after all...

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

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Chapter 20

SOME HOURS BEFORE

Orion sat hunched at his desk in the dim light of the office, the heavy oak table littered with scrolls and parchment. A stack of reports demanded his attention, trades, patrol routes, supply inventories, but his mind wasn't here. His fingers tapped the edge of a page absentmindedly as his gaze drifted to the flickering candle by the window.

The night outside was cold and silent. The only comfort was the faint crackle as he absently flipped another sheet, wishing the tedious chores would drown out the darker thoughts invading his mind.

Brynhild still avoided him, the silence between them growing thick with unspoken grievances. The words from their last argument echoed relentlessly. He hated the distance and resented himself for it. The weight of leadership felt heavier tonight, strangled by a gnawing dread.

A cold shiver crawled down his spine, not from the chill in the room, but the vivid nightmare refusing to loosen its grip.

In the dream, Sophia was trapped beneath snow-white limbs, her breath ragged, eyes wide with terror. Above her loomed a monstrous beast, enormous, pale as a ghost, and with a savage snarl, it tore into her. The monster was one Orion had only seen once in his life because they were rare and are mainly found on the northernmost side of Nirvana. Yes, more north than their pack was located. It had the wild elegance of a wolf but something profoundly unnatural, something from the dark heart of Nirvana itself, a Skylur.

He had woken with a start, sweat clinging to his skin, heart hammering like a battle drum.

Ronan's voice dragged him back to the present. "I didn't think you ever touched those papers willingly."

Orion shot him a glare, then forced a rough laugh. "There's no rest for me."

Ronan gasped in shock. "No rest for you? Wow! And here I was, thinking that I was the one without rest since you tend to avoid the office. Tell me, does your being here have anything to do with a certain black haired and sharp tongued woman?" He asked with a wide smile.

Orion ignored him, choosing to go back to his work when suddenly, a faint but distinct sound snapped him to alertness, a sharp, piercing whistle cutting through the quiet. His breath caught.

The whistle.

He rose instantly, heart pounding as memories surged: Tobias's warning, the enchanted necklace, and Sophia's lone figure disappearing down the snowy paths. The urgency burned in his chest; he couldn't waste a moment.

"Ronan," he barked, grabbing his coat. "Get Brynhild. You lead the hunters. We have to move!"

Ronan frowned because this was so sudden. Orion turned to him with a glare then remembered he was the only one who could hear the whistle.

"It's Tobias's whistle." He told Ronan.

That was all Ronan needed to hear. He sprang to action immediately.

Within minutes, the pack was in motion, soldiers and trackers, moving with precision as though the very earth hummed beneath their feet. The enchanted whistle's power was remarkable, its magic allowed Orion to pinpoint the signal's source, a pulse of ethereal light guiding them through the dark forest with unerring accuracy. They traveled fast, shadows flitting between ancient trees, the cold biting but adrenaline sharpening their senses.

The journey was swift but tense as Orion's mind spun with anticipation and dread.

Soon, the woods opened into a frozen clearing bathed in the soft morning light. There, gripping the edge of the shadows, stood the beast. They were farther from the pack buildings. The northernmost side of Nirvana.

The clearing was vast, a monstrous creature standing taller than any wolf Orion had known, or any man for that matter. Its pure white fur shimmered in the moonlight, each muscle rippling beneath a thick, matted coat that flickered with frost. But its head, larger than a horse's skull, bore teeth like carved obsidian blades, curved and jagged. Its glowing yellow eyes were eerily intelligent, radiating cold fury and an intense hunger.

This was no mere animal. It was a Skylur, a feared predator whispered about in the darkest legends of Nirvana, creatures said to roam in packs but neither wolf nor bear,

hunting tirelessly with brutal cunning. Their rarity made them all the more dangerous, an encounter almost always meant death. Orion had managed to escape one when he was younger but that was by luck. And why the fuck was the Skylur similar to the one he had seen in his dream? He shook his head. That was not important right now. They needed to get rid of this beast.

He looked to Brynhild, whose silver eyes sparkled beneath her hood, lips compressed in grim resolve. Without hesitation, she stepped forward, raising her hand sharply, an unspoken command that the soldiers understood instantly.

Swift as shadows, they closed in around the Skylur. Brynhild moved like a blade through ice, her every gesture precise and deadly, honed from years of leading hunts. She knocked aside a large branch with her gauntleted hand and launched forward, her spear flashing in the moonlight as she struck.

The beast snarled, twisting its immense frame with terrifying speed. One hunter fell beneath its swipe, clawed and bleeding, but Brynhild's warriors acted as one, forcing the creature back step by step.

The Skylur struck out, teeth razing a hunter's shoulder; another soldier's blade pierced through fur, drawing a roar that echoed like thunder.

Through the chaos, Orion's sword gleamed as he lunged, cleaving at the thick neck of the creature. The beast bellowed, staggering beneath the blow, eyes wild with rage and pain.

Brynhild was already circling, spear ready. With a grim nod from her, another hunter threw a spear that struck true, embedding deep in the beast's flank.

The monster collapsed with a final shudder, its breath a wet, rattling kill-note as the pack closed in.

Brynhild didn't wait for cheers or calls.

"Search! Find the others!" she ordered sharply.

Her voice rolled over the hushed camp like thunder.

As the pack fanned out into the woods, Orion's gaze was drawn to the fallen Skylur, its wild eyes dulling even as its powerful chest slowly stilled.

Then, a cold shock ran through him as his eyes caught the shimmer of the whistle necklace nestled in the snow nearby.

His mouth fell open; a curse tore from his throat, ragged and raw.

"Tobias," he called out even if the scent of fear he had perceived didn't seem like Tobias.

But if it really was him then he was going to have a word with him for going into this part when it's been made known just how dangerous it is.

At that moment, movement flickered through the trees.

But instead of Tobias, Sophia stumbled into the clearing, breath ragged, wide eyes darting frantically as reality crashed into her. She saw Brynhild first and then Orion, alive, fierce, in full hunt mode, standing mere yards away.

Her legs betrayed her, weak and trembling, unable to hold her as she sank to the frozen ground. Fear lanced through her like jagged ice.

"Why are you here?" she whispered, voice trembling.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.