

# **The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 23: Trash - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 23: Trash**

## Chapter 22

The room felt heavy. It was thick with the lingering chill of the fever that had left Sophia drained but not defeated. She lay propped against a tangle of pillows, one arm discarded carelessly across her forehead, blue eyes sharp despite the exhaustion roiling beneath her skin. Orion sat across from her, the wooden chair creaking under his weight as he leaned forward, lazing his stare in an attempt to break through the wall she held so tightly.

"I never called you trash though." Orion pointed out.

"You said I look like trash."

"It doesn't mean you are trash."

"You insinuated that I was trash though." She told him.

"And you jumped to conclusions. I never said it..."

"Outright."

"You're being stubborn," he said, voice rough and low like gravel sliding down a slope.

"And you are an ass." She told him.

"Are we going to do this all night?" He asked her.

Sophia didn't respond immediately. Instead, she turned her head away, exposing the sharp line of her jaw, muscles taut with refusal. "I don't care if you do..." she finally muttered, the words laden with iron and fatigue. "...or rather we. You are the annoying one here."

Her defiance stirred something inside Orion. He wanted to meet her stubbornness with softness, to soothe the raw nerves, but the sharp edge of her words pulled at the cords of his own tempered anger. He swallowed, then pressed again.

"You don't have the strength for this fight." He said softly. "You can save your energy for later, when you are healthy."

A dry laugh escaped her lips. "I really don't have the energy and I'm not so sure I'll have the energy when I'm healthy either."

"And even if I did," she continued, "I wouldn't waste it on you."

Their gazes locked, warriors sizing each other up in a battle of wills. Neither willing to back down, both bound by weariness they didn't admit aloud. For long minutes, silence twined around them, punctuated only by the faintest rasp of Sophia's labored breathing.

Finally, Orion shifted, voice softer but no less heavy with meaning. "The whole pack voted."

Her brow lifted, surprised despite herself.

"Okay?"

"Not just the elders," he continued, voice a mixture of weariness and resolve. "Everyone decided you'd stay."

Sophia blinked, the news washing over her in waves she hadn't expected. She swallowed, uncertain whether to breathe relief or brace for disappointment.

Orion's dark eyes searched hers. "I know you hate that I sent you away, but I'm curious though, why?"

"Why what?" She asked him.

"You don't even belong here. You are not a part of this pack but you are attached when you don't belong here so I want to understand, why?"

The question hung between them like smoke curling from a dying fire. Sophia's shoulders slumped and the fight flickered in her eyes. She looked down, her voice barely a whisper, fragile but honest. "You're right. I don't belong here. Not like you or them."

A pause, fuller than heavy silence.

"But... even with your annoying presence... and everything I hate about this place which if I'm not clear is you, I feel safer here."

She looked back up raw vulnerability shining through the armor she barely wore. "I can't explain why. I don't even understand it myself. But I feel safe in this place with people I don't even know."

Orion didn't speak. He simply nodded, his jaw tight. It could be that what she felt had to do with her last but she didn't remember a single thing about her life except her name.

"Never thought Nirvana would be a place where someone would feel safe." He said to her,

She opened her mouth to speak but he shook his head. "Get some sleep," he commanded, his voice softer than before but just as firm. "You really do look like trash."

"Kind words from an ogre." She muttered. "Get out of here, your presence makes the air unclean."

"But you were breathing so well," he pointed out.

"I never said so."

That wry corner of his mouth twitched before he rose from the chair, the sound of his boots on the rough floor echoing in the cool room.

He paused at the door, turning back one last time. "Tomorrow, you move to your own room."

Her voice, though weak, held a bitter edge. "Hopefully far from where you live."

Orion gave her the middle finger not that she could see him though.

With that, he left, leaving behind the quiet hum of the room and the scent of winter drifting just beneath the closed door.

The corridor outside was dim, lit by flickering sconces casting dancing shadows on stone walls worn smooth by years of footsteps. Orion's boots padded steadily as he made his way toward the compound's heart, the section known as the Residences. The Keeper of Residences, Serena, oversaw that domain.

Orion found her by the common area, seated with a ledger on her lap and a calm, precise manner slicing through the common clamor of arrivals and preparations.

"Serena," Orion called softly.

Her strong gaze lifted, eyes sharp yet warm. "Orion, what's the news? Is she awake?"

He inclined his head. "She is but we need a room for her. Is there any available? Somewhere quiet." He told her and after a second thought added, "and close to my room also."

Serena closed her ledger, setting it aside, with a frown on her face. "I'll find her a room. Somewhere quiet, private. Natural light if possible. But, are you sure you want her in a place next to yours?"

Orion smiled widely and devilishly. "She requested it."

Serena was shocked by the smile but didn't say anything. "I'll have it ready by dawn."

"Thank you," he said curtly, then turned to leave.

Orion had one more place to be that night. The council chamber was cool but tense, the air thick with responsibility and unraveling knots of fear. Brynhild and Ronan waited, their expressions stoic but shadowed.

"Any word on Tobias?" Orion asked, voice low.

Ronan shook his head, frustration tight in his jaw. "We found no trace. Scoured that entire area. Nothing."

Brynhild's silver eyes pierced the dim light. "His whistle was real. Someone had to have it."

"Right," Orion muttered, biting back a gnawing worry. "But Tobias wasn't there."

"Nor could we find a hint he ever passed through," Ronan added.

Orion's frown deepened. "Then we'll have to ask Sophia."

Ronan's hesitation was sharp. "She just woke up. Shouldn't we let her rest?"

Orion paused, gaze drifting toward the infirmary door where soft echoes of healing filled the hall.

"Rest first," he decided, voice firm. "We wait until she's stronger. Then we ask her everything."

Brynhild nodded slowly, relief tightening in her posture as she released a breath beneath her breath.

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

## **The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 24: New Beginnings and Old Shadows - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 24: New Beginnings and Old Shadows**

Chapter 22: New Beginnings and Old Shadows

The morning light filtered softly through the slatted window blinds, casting pale stripes across the quiet infirmary room. Sophia's breathing was steady now, calmer, her fever finally relapsing. The faint pallor of exhaustion remained, but her bright blue eyes, sharp as the moon on a plane winter night, shone with an eager restlessness that had previously seemed impossibly distant.

A soft creak from the doorway heralded the arrival of another presence. Brynhild stepped through, her silhouette framed against the dim light of the corridor beyond. The tone of authority and concern she always carried softened as her gaze fell on Sophia.

"How are you feeling?" Brynhild asked, voice low and steady as she crossed to the bedside and settled onto the chair beside Sophia. Her eyes settled on Sophia coolly. There was something about her eyes though that Sophia couldn't place. It was like Brynhild saw her but also didn't see her? She wasn't sure and besides that was an issue for another day.

Sophia turned her head slowly, managing a small smile tinged with weariness. "Better. Definitely better," she said softly. "I'm hoping I don't look like trash anymore. It's... a relief not to feel like I'm about to die every second."

Brynhild chuckled. "You don't look like trash at all."

Sophia rolled her eyes. "Tell that to the ogre that is bent on making my life a mess."

"Ogre?" Brynhild asked her.

"The one whose name shall not be mentioned."

"Ronan?" Brynhild asked her, intrigued.

"Ronan is nice unlike his friend."

"Orion?"

"Who else? I feel better though, especially without him here."

Brynhild smiled but didn't say anything regarding her calling Orion an ogre. "Good. We all feared the worst when you collapsed out there." She paused, her gaze gentle but probing. "Do you feel able to sit up for a moment, or maybe talk a bit?"

Sophia pushed back the blanket and swung her legs over the edge of the bed with surprising steadiness. "I think I can manage," she said, rubbing the sleep from her eyes.

Brynhild nodded approvingly. "Take your time. No rush."

Sophia's fingers absently traced the worn wooden armrest as memories skittered at the edges of her mind. The faintest smile touched her lips, and she muttered, mostly to herself, "That whistle Tobias gave me... it saved me. I swear, if I hadn't had that, I don't know if I'd even be here right now."

Brynhild let out a soft chuckle, shaking her head. "It's no surprise. That whistle is more than just a trinket. It's enchanted, a blow signals Orion and in time, we can firm a rescue

team, we do have one on standby though but the whistle... wherever it's blown, no matter the distance, it leads us. It's a lifeline for us, the pack's silent alarm."

Sophia's eyes flared with sudden curiosity. "The creature, Brynhild, what was it? I thought it was a bear at first but then it looked more like a wolf but again, it looked like neither. If I didn't have the whistle, only the goddess knows what would have happened to me. I saw my eyes flash right before my eyes. And why the fuck is it so huge? And those teeth..."

Brynhild laughed, a genuine sound that softened the lines around her eyes. "A Skylur. A creature that's the stuff of legend, a mix between wolf and bear, it's cunning and brutal. It's also always hungry and my husband says it carries a lot of diseases. He hounded me when he thought I was injured yesterday but thankfully, that was a false alarm. Few have lived to tell their tales after crossing paths with one. And it's extremely rare to find them also."

"So I'm part of the few that lived to tell the tale?" Sophia asked Brynhild who chuckled.

"A very lucky one."

Sophia shook her head once more in disbelief, the vividness of that night flashing again in her mind. "It was so huge, so fast. I barely knew what hit me...or how I didn't get ripped apart."

Brynhild's glance flicked toward the window as if expecting the shadows of another beast to lurk there. "Luck was on your side. And Tobias was close enough to hear your call."

Sophia nodded, voice dropping. "He gave me that whistle and told me to go ahead with my path while he handled his business. Well...he tried to come with me but I ensured he went on his part. I...I tried to follow him but... I got lost. I don't understand how though. It was like he just disappeared."

Brynhild laughed again, the sound lighter now. "That road can twist even the best of hunters around. You did well to survive on your own. And Tobias didn't use just one road. The path to the black market is confusing and tricky because it's a secret. If you are not in on it, you'll get lost."

"Oh," Sophia said with wide eyes. "That explains why I got lost."

"Did you think Tobias was hurt?" Sophia asked, eyes fixed on Brynhild now, searching.

Brynhild's gaze softened. "We feared the worst when the whistle was found near the fallen Skylur. We didn't know if he had been attacked."

Sophia's fingers clenched tightly, as though squeezing those memories into existence. "He... he insisted I take the whistle before we parted ways. He had business to do but promised he'd find me again when he was done."

"Tobias said that?" Brynhild asked her, shock written in her face.

"Why do you sound so surprised?" Sophia asked her.

"It's because I am. Tobias isn't kind. He hardly seems interested in conversations except it has to do with making money." Brynhild told him.

Sophia frowned. The person she met sounded different from who Brynhild was talking about.

"Is this the same Tobias?" She asked Brynhild.

"It is. Tobias is a bit like my husband. He is only familiar with friends but with strangers, nope. He finds it hard to relate with them. He wasn't even seen as a kind person to most people in our pack and he has been with us all his life." Brynhild explained.

"That's weird because he seemed kind to me. He even joked with me." She told Brynhild.

"Tobias telling a stranger a joke? Wow, never thought I'd hear this any day. But then again, I think it's because it's you, you've only been here for a few days and you've elicited different and various emotions in our members." Brynhild said to her.

"Are you sure it's different? Orion seems the same to me though." She told Brynhild.

"Believe me, Orion is the one behaving more differently."

"Anyhow," Brynhild said as she stood up, "I came here for two things and the first is done."

"What's the second?" Sophia asked her.

"Showing you a place to call your own." Brynhild said as she extended her hand to Sophia to assist her.

Sophia hesitated, then grasped Brynhild's hand, pulling herself upright with a tentative smile.

"I'd like that." She said quietly. "A place to call my own."

Brynhild's smile broadened, warmed by the fragile hope. "Good. I'll show you to your new quarters. When you're stronger, I'll walk you through the pack. There's much you need to see."

As they exited the infirmary, the daylight pouring faintly through frost-coated windows felt less harsh, less alien. The pack compound, with its woven paths and sturdy stone, awaited like a vast, unexplored continent.

They crossed the sprawling courtyard to the Residence Hall, a solid, timbered building that stood as a beacon of safety and community within the wild expanse of Nirvana. Brynhild walked with confidence, her cloak swaying slightly around the gentle curve of her belly, the weight of her pregnancy adding a measured pace to their steps.

Inside, the scent of polished wood and fresh herbs mingled with flickering candle flames arranged purposefully along the walls. The quiet murmur of activity hinted at a living heart nestled in the building's depths.

At the doorway of a well-appointed chamber stood Serena, the Keeper of Residences. She was mid-thirties, her dark hair streaked gently with silver feathers just like Brynhild's but a different colour from Brynhild's. Her eyes were sharp, pulling equal parts command and kindness in their gaze.

"Orion told me you'd be arriving soon," Serena greeted, wiping her hands on a linen cloth as if she'd just finished minor repairs.

Sophia cast a wide look at the room she was to call home, a small yet elegantly crafted cabin room, with high windows that welcomed the morning light. The walls were finished in soft pine, adorned with handwoven tapestries depicting the eternal moon phases, while a sturdy bed sat beneath a carved alcove.

For the first time in weeks, Sophia felt a flicker of something like peace. "It's beautiful," she murmured, stepping carefully to the window to peer out at the shimmering frost catching the sun.

Serena's smile was warm. "That's the hope. You'll be safe here."

Brynhild, who had been silently watching, suddenly furrowed her brows, lips pressing in thought. After a breath, her silver gaze turned to Sophia.

"Tell me though," she began, voice gentle but probing, "why did you decide on your home being next to Orion's?"

Sophia froze, her eyes snapping wide open in horror. "Next to his?" she breathed, voice rising in disbelief.

Brynhild nodded. "Wasn't that what you wanted?"

"Orion said that was what you wanted." Serena said to her.

Sophia's cheeks flushed scarlet, a black streak of embarrassment flushing her pale skin. "That fucking bastard. I specifically requested one far from his home. I'll kill him, I swear I will."

"Who are we killing?" A voice asked suddenly from behind Sophia who screamed in shock as she ran to hide behind Brynhild.

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

## Chapter 25: An Ogre, Some Children, and Unwelcome Surprises

### Chapter 24: An Ogre, Some Children, and Unwelcome Surprises

"Who are we killing?" A voice asked suddenly from behind Sophia who screamed in shock as she ran to hide behind Brynhild.

She dove back behind Brynhild's tiny frame, pressing herself as flat as she could against the cool stone floor beneath the heavy rugs. Her breath caught in her throat, every nerve firing warning signals.

"What are you doing?" Brynhild asked her.

"Hiding. What does it look like I'm doing?" Sophia replied to her.

Serena stared at her with mirth flowing in her eyes, her lips twitched with a smile threatening to break through.

"Who are we hiding from?" Orion asked as he stepped further into the room.

Sophia peeked out carefully, and straightened herself, trying to pretend like she wasn't hiding some few moments ago.

Serena smiled knowingly but didn't say a word.

"Who was hiding?" Sophia asked with a cough.

"Wasn't that you hiding behind Brynhild just now?" Orion asked her.

"Me?" She asked him with wide eyes like she could not believe he would say something like that but the look in his eyes showed that she had been caught red handed so she took a different tactic.

"Um..." she cleared her throat. "I only hid because I thought there was an ogre or something."

Brynhild masked a smirk behind her hand, her eyes wrinkling at the corners.

"So I'm an ogre now?" Orion asked her.

She shrugged. "If the shoe fits."

She finally lifted her gaze from the floor to give him a look, but what stole Sophia's attention away were the three small, lively figures clinging to him like greedy monkeys.

One toddler was perched happily on his broad shoulder, tiny hands gripping thick hair as if scaling a tree. Another dangled from his arm, giggling with wild delight, nails tapping absently on Orion's chest. The smallest one scuttled at his feet, tugging insistently on his cloak's hem.

Sophia blinked in shock, the mental image of Orion as a jungle gym refusing to leave her mind. "Alright," she muttered under her breath, "this just keeps getting weirder. Seriously, who did you manage to impregnate? Who even let you do it to them?"

Her snark was sharp, but before she could launch into an all-out investigation of Orion's reproductive success, a small voice suddenly piped up, echoing the innocence of toddlers.

"Who are you?"

Sophia froze as one of the toddlers, bright-eyed and curious, pointed a pudgy finger at her and blinked expectantly.

Caught off guard but secretly delighted, Sophia crouched to their level, dropping all thoughts about the ogre and his dubious love life. "I'm Sophia,"

she said gently, her voice softening just for them. "And who might you tiny tornadoes be?"

"We are not tomadoes." One of them spoke up.

Sophia noticed how all three children looked like each other and that it was going to be hard differentiating them. Triplets perhaps, she thought to herself. She wasn't even surprised that Orion would be a father to triplets but none of the children looked like him.

"What are you then?" She asked.

"Werewolves." They replied together, making Sophia laugh.

Their father wasn't cute or even remotely likeable but these children were cute.

"Okay, werewolves. What are your names?" She asked softly.

Sophia had no idea that everyone in the room was watching her quietly. She was just swept up with conversing with the children.

The children laughed and jabbered at once, introducing themselves as Niko, Lira, and Tavi, names flowing almost too fast to catch, and launched into an enthusiastic recount of important facts about bugs, flowers, and undefeated hide-and-seek games.

"You're really pretty!" Lira declared brazenly, poking Sophia's cheek without warning.

Sophia chuckled, wincing a little but playing along all the same. "Thanks, little miss Lila. Coming from you, that means a lot."

Serena leaned in with an amused smile. "Usually they're less... welcoming. You're lucky."

Sophia grinned and allowed herself to relax a little. "Yeah, I think I'll take the company over the ogre any day."

Serena shot a glance toward Orion, who was still standing, almost resigned, with toddlers draped over him like he was some kind of climbing frame.

Clearing her throat, Serena asked, "Where are their siblings now? Shouldn't they be... somewhere else?"

Niko piped up instantly, "With Daddy! He's showing Chris and Gino something."

Serena exchanged a quick glance with Orion who rubbed the back of his neck, clearly outnumbered but amused.

Sophia's eyes narrowed, and realization dawned like a slow sunrise. "Wait. Those are your children?"

Serena nodded with a chuckle. "Yes, quite the handful, aren't they?"

"So you got together with this..." Sophia pointed at Orion.

Serena's eyes widened while Brynhild burst laughing because she couldn't hold it in anymore.

"Oh no," Serena said as she shook her head. "Orion isn't even my type. My mate is someone else entirely."

"Glad to know I'm not your type, Serena." Orion said to her with mock hurt.

"There, there," Lila said as she rubbed Orion with her little hands, trying to console him.

"I am so sorry." Sophia apologized, as she felt the embarrassment climbing her cheeks.

Serena gave Sophia a knowing smirk. "It's okay. With the way they enjoy climbing him like a tree, you'd think he was their father. Everyone makes mistakes."

"And not everyone makes assumptions but here we are." Orion said to her.

Serena smiled and motioned toward the door. "Well, these wild things need to be put back to their tutor before they wear you out. And Sophia?"

"Yeah?"

"I hope you have a nice stay here. Welcome to Nightshade." Serena said to her.

"Thank you."

As Serena gathered the kids and headed off, the chatter about bugs and secret hideouts fading down the hall, Brynhild stepped toward Orion, lowering her voice.

"I spoke with her already, Tobias was the one who gave her the whistle but she got lost trying to follow him. I'm sure he is fine, but we can send someone to the black market to check in, just to be certain he's safe."

Orion nodded, expression serious. "Alright. Sam should be able to do that."

Brynhild gave him a look but Orion shrugged. In his defence, Sam would be doing her job. It didn't matter that she had a complicated relationship with Tobias.

Brynhild looked over to Sophia, offering a soft but firm smile. "I'll see you later. Take a rest and just enjoy the peace."

For once, Sophia's own smirk was filled with gratitude. "Got it."

Brynhild gave a nod, excusing herself with a quiet "I'll leave you both to it. Rest properly."

Orion turned back toward Sophia, his gaze sharpening with something between annoyance and curiosity.

"So, Sophia, answer me this, who were we planning on killing? Or is that a secret you want to keep?"