

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 26: The ogre and Sophia - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 26: The ogre and Sophia

Chapter 25: The ogre and Sophia.

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

Sophia folded her arms, stepping into her sharpest smile, voice full of mockery. "We'll get to that when your ogre self stops treating me like a punching bag."

Orion's lips twitched in a reluctant grin. "Oh! I never knew you were a punching bag. Can you even handle my fists?"

Sophia narrowed her eyes, ready to fire back, but before she could utter a word, Orion cut in smoothly, voice dropping to a growl. "And just so you know, I'll know if you've been lying."

"I don't lie."

"Really? Remember the whole not hiding behind Brynhild act?"

Sophia went crimson but huffed loudly, plunging full force into defiance. "That was a slip of tongue."

"A slip? I recall it being intentional though." He said with a smirk.

"You don't recall anything. Your brain is too tiny, remember?" She asked him.

"Oh, I never thought you'd see my brain. But then if it's tiny, I wonder how yours is."

"Considerably bigger since I happen to be smarter than you."

Orion crossed his arms. "Keep telling yourself that, Sophia."

There was a pause, the kind that crackles with unsaid challenges. Then Orion tilted his head and asked casually, "So... how's the house? Settling in just fine?"

For a heartbeat, Sophia's gaze flicked to the floor, her mind running over the cozy quarters and soft light in the room Serena had prepared. Then she looked back up, fiery again. "The house," she spat the word as if it were a brandished weapon, "was supposed to be nowhere near your own. And yet here we are, next door neighbors. Care to explain why you decided to do the exact opposite of what I told you?"

Orion raised a brow, an infuriatingly smug glint in his eye. "Oh? I was unaware you were the one in charge of the pack's real estate."

Sophia jabbed a finger at him. "Don't you dare sass me about this. I told you to keep my place far from yours. I'm not about to spend my days yawning at your stupid face."

"Consider it a gift," he said dryly. "Nothing says 'welcome to the pack' like having me, the alpha of the pack two stones' throw away."

Sophia snorted. "Wow! Sometimes I wonder why I even bother to speak with you."

Orion smirked. "Maybe it's because I'm interesting after all."

"You can't really believe that right?" She asked him.

"I am interesting. You are just yet to peel down the layers." He told her.

"I don't want to stay next to your home. I can't cope with seeing your ass everyday."

"It's a beautiful ass, you wouldn't be disappointed." He replied to her.

They both locked eyes, a mutual dare laid bare and then she smirked, a sly flash of amusement beneath the irritation. "You really do enjoy messing with me, don't you?"

Orion shrugged with a wolfish grin. "I prefer calling it 'strategic interference.' Besides, it's entertaining watching you squirm."

That pushed Sophia's temper to the edge, but instead of the usual barbs, she bit back with a grin, becoming only when she was about to claim victory. "Well, enjoy it while it lasts. I have a terrible aim, but trust me one day, you'll be the one begging for peace."

"Bold words," Orion mused, taking a half-step closer. "especially when you have terrible aim. How do you think you'd win the battle then?"

Sophia cursed quietly because she had walked right into that one but she wasn't going to give up yet. "You'd know after I win."

He let out a low chuckle that rumbled in his chest. "Confidence. I like that. I might even start to worry."

"You should. Never underestimate your opponent."

"The same opponent that was almost killed by a skylur?" He asked her.

Sophia's eyes widened. "That beast was huge. How the fuck was I supposed to know how to deal with him?"

Orion laughed at that. "Maybe for one, don't get injured by it." He said nodding towards her injury that was covered with a plaster. "How is it?"

"Better. But...are you caring for your opponent right now?" She asked him.

"Nope. I'm keeping my enemies closer if at all. And besides, I want you to be in perfect shape when we start going after each other." He told her.

"Fuck you, Orion." She told him.

Orion laughed once more, a low chuckle that sent her heart beating extremely fast. The sound warmed her but she wasn't going to focus on why or her. Right now, she only wanted him out of her room. She'll meet with Serena later on changing her new home because she really couldn't live next to Orion.

"I'll get out of your hair now, rest your head a bit now, we don't want you going mad from delusion after all." He said to her,

Sophia gave him the middle finger as he walked out of the room. He made his way to Sam immediately. She was fast and would be the perfect person to find out if Tobias was okay after all. It didn't matter that Sam and Tobias had unsettled issues although yes, he was nosy but that wasn't the main reason he sent her. It was because she was the better choice.

Orion found her with Holly at the training grounds. They were sparring together and while they were getting better he could still spot some issues with their footwork.

Holly was the first to notice him. She gave him a wide smile. Her blonde hair packed in a bun and her brown eyes gazed at him lovingly but Orion was never going to give her the kind of affection she sought from him.

She approached him just as Orion began walking into the ring.

"What are you doing here?" She asked him brightly. "Are you going to finally take me up on my request?"

Orion shook his head. "You need more work before I can spar with you. Both of you do and I'm here for Sam."

It was obvious how hurt Holly was by that statement. She had been sure that Orion had come for her especially because of their relationship or what she thought was their relationship. It was obvious to everyone how attracted she was to him and she had decided to win his heart. She had thought it would be an easy job especially given the fact that they know each other and had been each other's firsts but that wasn't the case at all.

Sam approached Orion, her bluish Gray eyes focused on him and her brows together in a frown. Orion hardly sought her out so this was a rare occasion and she had to wonder what exactly could make him look for her.

"To what do I owe the pleasure of this visit?" She asked him coolly.

Orion turned to Holly, there was no point in alerting her of the job he was about to give to Sam especially because Holly was a bit of a gossip just like the majority of the pack members. It would not be long before everyone knew that Sam was sent to get Tobias or rather, ensure he was safe.

"Care to walk with me?" Orion asked her.

Sam's frown deepened but she didn't say anything. She gave him a nod.

"We will continue this another time." She said to Holly whose suspicious gaze moved between the both of them, Orion and Sam specifically but she understood that perhaps this was something that Orion didn't want her to hear or be privy to so she let it slide.

"Of course." She said to Sam with a smile that didn't really seem genuine. "I'll see you soon." She told Orion and without another word, she left.

"What is so secret that you didn't want her to hear?" Sam asked Orion.

"Let's begin that walk shall we?" Orion asked her.

Sam sighed but fell into pace next to Orion. They walked for a short distance and after ensuring that the nosy Holly who had been hanging around was no longer hanging around, he turned to Sam.

"I need you to go to Tobias." He told her.

Sam's steps faltered. "What the hell? Is something wrong with him?" She asked worriedly.

Orion didn't point at the fact that she was worried about someone she had insisted she wasn't interested in but kept the information to himself.

"I want to ensure that he's alright. That's all." He told her.

"Oh!" She said relieved.

"If you don't want to do this, I can send someone else." He told her.

"No," she shook her head. "It's just to ensure if he's okay right? I can do that. And besides I'm the fastest in the pack. What if there is actually something wrong after all? I'll be the best person to scout the situation and come back as fast as possible."

"Sure. That's exactly why I came to you. Will you be able to leave today?" He asked her.

"Of course." She said to him, "If that's all, I'll be on my way now."

"Of course. And...Sam?" He called out just before she could walk away.

"What is it?"

"Be safe too. Don't give him a hard time." He told her.

She didn't reply. She gave him a nod and walked away worry for Tobias enveloping her.

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

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 27: Black Swan in the Shadows - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 27: Black Swan in the Shadows

Chapter 26: Black Swan in the Shadows

The night wrapped the forest in a velvety darkness as Sam moved silently through the trees, her senses sharp and alert. Every leaf beneath her paw, every distant rustle, was noted but ignored in favor of steady progress. The moon offered a pale silver glow, just enough to guide her without betraying her presence. Her wolf form was lithe and nimble, muscles rippling smoothly as she traced the well-rehearsed path toward the black market, an underworld that few dared tread, but one she once knew intimately.

Her heart was heavy with worry, a knot tightening in her chest since the conversation with Orion. His rare trust and the urgency in his voice, pressed on her mind like a weight. She was the fastest runner in their pack, and now the fastest seeker in the labyrinthine shadows of the black market. If anyone could reach Tobias quickly and discreetly, it was her.

The black market lay nestled at the boundary between the civilized enclaves of the pack and the dangerous wildlands beyond. It was a melting pot of secrets, deals, and dark allegiances hidden beneath lines of smoke and flickering torchlight. As Sam approached, the bustle grew louder, thousands of whispered deals, sharp haggling voices, and the muted clatter of trade.

She slowed into a cautious stride, scenting the air thickened with spices, sweat, wood smoke, and something darker perhaps oil and something metallic. She shifted back to her human form immediately so as not to alert people. In the market, it was forbidden to use your powers. Witches didn't cast spells, werewolves didn't shift, demons hid themselves and so on.

The market was alive, yet oddly subdued. Most faces were obscured by masks, ornate and crude, plain and bizarre, a necessity for those who brokered goods the law and pack elders would sooner bury in silence than discuss openly. Identities needed concealment. It was a world of phantoms trading in shadows.

Sam herself was cloaked in muted black, the fabric billowing with her movement, a mask concealing all but sharp bluish gray eyes. Braids of raven black hair, threaded with slender feathers less grand than Brynhild's but deliberate and distinct, peeked beneath the hood. Her reputation as Black Swan was whispered through the air like a ghost story told in dry and fearful tones, a name Tobias had gifted her and a mantle she carried with careful pride. Although she wasn't ever going to let him know.

Every stall she passed was a study in secrecy, jars of unidentifiable herbs, weapon smiths polishing wicked blades, traders offering exotic powders and crushed bones in exchange for coins or favors owed. Spirits brewed in clay pots, bottles glimmered with unknown liquids, and from shadowed corners came the soft clink of locks and the hiss of threats.

At last, she arrived at the Nightshade Pack's humble stall, unassuming to the inexperienced eye, but a well-known stronghold where those loyal to the pack brokered safe passage through the madness. It thrummed with activity; traders, couriers, and buyers moved in and out with practiced precision.

Sam slipped to the edge, eyes scanning for familiar faces behind the masks. Her voice, low and steady, broke the murmurs as she called out, "I am looking for the one called Owl."

At once, several masked figures turned toward her, their gazes sharp as they closed ranks with a practiced wariness. They blocked any easy escape, their posture undisguised, interrogation.

A harsh whisper cut through the tense silence, "Who sent you?"

Sam's knowing eyes met theirs, unflinching under the thin glow of lantern light. "Tell your master that Black Swan is here."

The name carried weight, it was theirs to guard, theirs to strike fear with and Tobias would know.

Within moments, a tall man slipped from the shadows, his features obscured by a black mask shaped with sharp angles mimicking an owl's visage. His movements were fluid, deliberate. It was Tobias. Or rather, Owl, as he was known within this clandestine realm.

"Did you come alone?" His voice was calm but with an edge sharpened by years of shadowy dealings.

"Yes." Sam replied, voice cool.

Owl gestured with a nod to part of the stall, a deeper alcove hidden by heavy tapestries and guarded by silent watchers. "Come, we speak in private."

Sam followed, muscles tense, heart steady but mind spinning with memories long buried and dangers freshly ignited.

As the tapestries fell behind them, Tobias did not remove his mask fully, but his eyes intense, dark, and calculating met hers with a flicker of something softer. Not tenderness, exactly, but something that caught under her skin.

"You don't make many trips here yourself anymore," he observed, stepping close. "What brings Black Swan into these depths?"

Sam shrugged, catching his gaze without wavering. "Simple enough. Orion sent me. He wanted to be sure that you're alive and well."

Tobias's brows deepened in a frown. "Why wouldn't I be?"

"I didn't ask. I just did as I was told." She told him.

"Or you came because you were worried?" He asked her with a raised eyebrow.

"The pack worries," she continued, voice low and even. "Not me. I only did what I was told to do."

"Sure. You came a long way into enemy territory alone just because Orion asked for it." he said, the tension in the air thickening. "Tell me what happens when the shadows catch you?"

Sam's mind recalled old scars, betrayals, and alliances forged in smoke and blood. "Then I fight. I'm Black Swan, remember?"

"Yes, you are but we both know you are not much of a fighter and Orion still has no idea why you really stopped coming to the black market." He stepped closer, his breath warm, voice dropping to a near whisper. "I wonder what he'll do when he finds out you lied."

"You know very well none of us can lie to Orion." She told him.

"Oh, I forgot. You withheld information." He told her.

She glared at him. "What the fuck is your issue? What do you want?"

Tobias's eyes glinted with something wicked. "Nothing is my issue because as I recall, you are the one with the issues."

"I do not have any issues. I only don't want to be with a boy." Sam said to him.

"You are only six years older than me. I'm no more that small child you knew." He said to her,

"I've known you since you were a child." Sam said to him. "I will not do this with you."

"Don't act like you've known me since I was a young boy. You only knew me when I was eighteen. That's hardly been up to six years." He told her.

"And those six years are the wisdom I have on you. I still stand by what I told you those years ago. You are too young for me and I will not settle for a boy."

Their voices lowered, edged with layers of meaning, old wounds, unspoken desires, territorial pride.

"But you slept with me just last year." He pointed out.

"A fucking mistake because I was drunk."

"But the mark shows something different. We are mat..."

"Fuck the mark and the moon goddess for this cruel joke. I'm done here." She turned to leave.

Before she could disappear fully, Tobias reached out, gripping her arm and in one sudden movement pulled her into an unexpected embrace.

"Thank you," he whispered fiercely, voice breaking with sincerity. "For coming this far even with how dangerous it is."

The hug was brief, but Sam kept her face stoic, not allowing the flicker of desire or relief to show.

She stepped away smoothly, voice calm as she said, "Stay safe." Then she turned and melted back into the shadows from which she had come.

Outside, the swirl of the black market's unrest resumed, and Sam raced back along the secret paths, footsteps light but heart pounding.

Orion had been the only one aware of her departure and would be the first to know of her return.

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

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 28: Reluctant Tours with Orion - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 28: Reluctant Tours with Orion

Chapter 27: Reluctant Tours With Orion

Sam didn't hang around long after stepping through the Nightshade Pack gates, her boots barely making a sound as she strode straight toward Orion's quarters. Her cloak swayed behind her, dark as the night itself, and her sharp eyes darted briefly over her shoulder even though she was safely within the pack's bounds, old habits of caution clung tight.

Orion was tinkering with a piece of leather armor when she arrived, head down, fingers deft and sure. Without looking up, he grunted a greeting.

"He's okay," Sam said, voice clipped, leaving no room for questions or pleasantries.

Orion paused mid-stitch, raising a brow but saying nothing in response.

"And... that's it?" he pressed.

Sam shrugged, tossing the cloak from her shoulders and already turning away. "That's all you need to know. Tobias is alive and intact."

Orion gave a short laugh, shaking his head. "Something happened between you two again, huh? Not surprising."

Sam didn't look back but added, "I'm done here." And with that, she disappeared, leaving a subtle scent of cedar and cold earth hanging behind her.

Orion stared after her for several long seconds, his grin fading into a shadowed frown. Something between amusement and exasperation flickered in his dark eyes before he returned to his work which wasn't the documents he was supposed to be going through.

Days drifted by, marked only by the subtle signs of Sophie's full recovery. The flush of fever had left her cheeks, the fire in her blue eyes burning steady and bright instead of flickering. She moved with cautious strength, each step less uncertain than the last.

One brittle morning, her resolve hardened alongside her healing. Today was the day to see the pack up close, to stop lurking in the shadows of corridors and whispered conversations.

She gathered her cloak and set foot toward where Brynhild usually spent her mornings, near the central gardens, where the wild herbs and medicines grew in tended beds that smelled of earth and rain.

But as she rounded the corner behind the infirmary, she nearly bumped straight into Orion.

He looked impossibly casual as usual, arms folded over his broad chest, that sarcastic smirk playing on his lips like he knew exactly what she was about to do.

"Fancy seeing you here... stalking what, the resident pregnant goddess?" he quipped.

Sophia rolled her eyes but squared her shoulders. "I was hoping to find Brynhild. Thought she might show me around the pack. You know, so I don't have to ask directions every time I want to find the mess hall."

Orion's smirk deepened, his eyes narrowing a touch. "Oh? So you want a guided tour?"

Sophia folded her arms, unwilling to let him win this one too easily. "Maybe I do."

He took a step closer, voice dropping to that edge-of-danger tone she knew all too well. "Let me guess... you're scouting territory. Passing info to your people."

"Right," Sophia said coolly, "because I want to make it so easy for you to hunt me."

Orion felt it immediately, she had just told a lie. But he shook it off. Perhaps it was only a lie because she didn't remember who she was.

Orion chuckled darkly. "You're full of surprises."

Sophia matched his smile with a harder one of her own. "Not all of them are pleasant, I'm afraid."

He turned away briefly, then over his shoulder said, "Fine. I'll be your guide."

Her brow lifted sharply.

"What? Brynhild needs more rest these days with the last trimester and someone has to keep your stubborn ass from getting lost."

Sophia huffed, annoyed. "Well, I suppose I'm stuck with you then."

He nodded solemnly, making a show of authority. "Consider it your lucky day."

Their tour started off brisk.

Orion led through the winding paths lined with tall pines and stone markers carved with dates and names, memorials venerating fallen pack members. The air smelled of pine resin and damp earth, the sound of distant voices and laughter drifting like ghosts on the wind.

"You're unusually quiet," Orion muttered after a moment, glancing at her with a sideways smirk. "Don't tell me you're enjoying yourself."

Sophia scoffed but kept pace, her hands stuffed deep in the pockets of her cloak. "If I was likely to enjoy your company, I'd be asking for that guided tour a lot earlier."

He shook his head but didn't reply, instead pressing on toward the central clearing. The pack moved like a living organism here, hunters sharpening blades beside stoves smoking thick stew, cubs chasing one another around with reckless joy, elders seated beneath a great oak sharing stories.

Sophia's sharp eyes caught the curious and cautious gazes aimed her way, some open curiosity, others laced with disdain. She couldn't decide if the looks were warnings or invitations.

They passed the training grounds next, where fights and drills were underway. Young wolves sparred with intense concentration, muscles rippling, eyes burning bright with fresh ambition.

"Look," Orion remarked dryly, "the future slaughterers in training. All wishing to be on my good side."

Sophia snorted. "Don't flatter yourself. You're probably the most feared, not the most liked."

Orion grinned. "Fear's a kind of respect. You should try it."

Sophia gave a mock shudder. "Whatever helps you sleep at night."

The tour moved on with Orion leading, barely pausing. She stumbled now and then, rattled by the confusion of the winding layout and the brisk pace.

"I'd let you ask questions," he told her without looking back, "but you might actually think I'd answer."

"Really?" she called, one hand gripping a tree to steady herself.

He stopped and gave her a rare, direct look. "Of course."

Sophia made a face as if to bite back a retort, then relented. "Wouldn't expect any less."

They rounded a bend and came to the pack council hall, an imposing stone building etched with silver runes that glowed faintly blue in the broken daylight.

"Ah, the seat of all terrible decisions," Sophia said wryly.

Orion nodded, looking momentarily serious. "Some of the best decisions come from here. When they don't blow up in our faces."

Sophia glanced at him, puzzled for a moment. "You sound almost hopeful."

He shrugged. "I prefer cautious optimism."

As the sky shifted toward dusk, their brisk tour wound down near a small clearing where the pack held markets on full moon nights, and ritual gatherings in the cold season.

Sophia took a deep breath, her sharp gaze scanning the faces around.

Orion's voice cut through her thoughts. "So, what do you think? About the pack? This place?"

She exhaled slowly. "It's... beautiful, I guess. In a wild, dangerous sort of way."

He smirked. "Bet you didn't expect to find even a shred of 'beauty' under all the blood and bites."

Sophia shot him a pointed look. "Don't push your luck."

He laughed, that gruff sound that echoed among the trees. "Luck's in short supply 'round here."

Sophia gave a short nod. "Yeah, well, it isn't like I'm some stranger to that."

Overhead, the first stars blinked awake.

Orion glanced up then back at her, voice quieter but laced with steel. "Keep your eyes open. This pack is nothing if not unpredictable."

"And you're an expert in unpredictability, aren't you?" Sophia teased.

He bit back a smile. "Only in my dealings with you."

Sophia smirked. "Lucky me."

They shared a moment of silence, the noise of the pack swirling gently around them, a living reminder that however tense or thorny their relationship, the pack and perhaps their fates were irreversibly entwined.

She passed a few more stares on their way back, some curious, some wary, and with every step, she knew she was neither fully an outsider, nor fully part of this strange, snarling family. Somewhere in between, in the sharp exchange of glances, snide comments, and reluctant respect.

Sophia lagged behind Orion as he strode ahead finally, brushing her cloak aside from her arms.

"Now that we are done..."

"You are the worst guide ever." She interrupted him.

"Tell me something I don't know." He told her with a wide smile.

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

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 29: When the Pack Runs Wild - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 29: When the Pack Runs Wild

Chapter 28: When the Pack Runs Wild

The morning sun filtered softly through towering pines, dappling the woven paths of the Nightshade compound in golden light. Sophia walked beside Brynhild, her steps tentative but determined, eyes tracing the familiar but still mysterious cluster of buildings and faces that made up the pack.

Brynhild moved with a calm, steady grace, hands often resting on the gentle swell of her heavily pregnant belly. Her voice was confident and clear, the cadence of someone used to command, strength softening into warmth when she spoke to Sophia.

"So, this is where the magic happens," Brynhild said, gesturing ahead. "Over there, you'll find the medical center. Lysander and his apprentices tend to wounds, mend bones, and offer what little comfort medicine can."

Sophia's gaze flicked toward the sturdy stone building, its windows glowing softly. "And you'll be there too?" she asked.

"What will I be doing there? I only know how to break bones, not fix them, that's all on Lysander." She told Sophia who laughed.

Truly, Brynhild did not look like someone who could actually mend bones.

"So you haven't tried to assist him at all?" Sophia asked her curiously.

Brynhild laughed. "Oh, I have but he sent me out immediately. I tried to help mix herbs but it was like I had two left hands. I slowed them down instead."

"I'm better with taking care of the defenses of the pack." She told her.

They continued walking and Brynhild pointed out to another building where children were gathered. They looked older than Serena's kids and Sophia wondered what was going on. There was a man at the front and the children had...

"Are they holding books?" Sophia asked in shock.

"Yep." Brynhild replied to her. "Philip was the one who brought the idea that we should teach the children of the pack. Apart from Eldric, he has profound knowledge and he is better at passing that knowledge."

Sophia had no idea who Eldric was but she was sure she would find out later. And she couldn't explain it but it warmed her heart to see something like this and the children looked very eager to learn.

"That's nice." She said to Brynhild who nodded.

"The people my age didn't have the luxury especially after we moved here but Philip thought it would be great to have it here and this time, it will be just our own and not in someone's pack where we have to walk to get to." Brynhild said to Sophia.

Sophia wanted to ask her what she meant by 'after they moved here'. Did they not leave here all along? But she kept quiet. Besides, she had only just been accepted to the pack although it even that that was debatable given how some people stared at her but she knew when to draw the line sometimes.

They continued walking with Brynhild showing her everything she could and explaining what each building was used for. Brynhild pointed out the blacksmith workshop, a place that was filled with heat. She also showed Sophia the building where artisans, carpenters and the like worked in. Funny how she had been curious about the building the previous day especially because of how it was constructed but Orion didn't care. They had just walked past everything and even with her grumbling, he didn't care.

"Remind me why Orion wasted my time giving me a tour?" Sophia muttered, voice edged with annoyance.

"Orion gave you a tour?" Brynhild asked her in surprise.

"I didn't tell you?" Sophia replied to her.

"No."

"Well he did but I'm sure that can hardly be called a tour. I'd rather call it a movement instead." Sophia grumbled out

Brynhild's lips twitched in an amused half-smile. "I'm pretty sure it wasn't that bad."

Sophia gave her a look. "It was that bad." She replied as she demonstrated exactly what Orion had done the previous day, making Brynhild laugh.

The compound settled around them in gentle bustle, people moving with purpose and familiar ease though some kept wary, eyes flickering with curiosity toward the newcomer in their midst.

Suddenly, a gust of wind raced past them, stirring Brynhild's cloak and whipping Sophia's hair into her face.

"What the hell?" Sophia asked loudly.

Out of the corner of her eye, Sophia caught sight of someone dashing down the trail, a streak of dark limbs and muscular motion cutting a path through the morning calm.

Before she could fully register, another figure pursued the first, shouting sharply, "Come back here, you idiot!"

She recognized the voice immediately and noticed how the pack's mood shifted instantly. Laughter bloomed like wildfire as spectators gathered, some cheering while others watched on with fond amusement.

Sophia frowned. "What in the goddess' name is this?"

Brynhild let out a hearty laugh, her breath coming in easily despite the pregnancy. "Ah, this? You'll see it often here, once a week at least."

Sophia blinked. "Once a week? What is happening? What the hell kind of pack is Orion running?"

Brynhild shook her head playfully. "The type where even the alpha runs when the paperwork calls."

Sophia turned just in time to see the source of the current chaos, two figures weaving through the crowd, laughter and shouts bouncing between them like thunderclaps.

"Go, Orion!" Sophia heard people cheering and clapping.

"You'll get him this time, Ronan!" Some others cheered.

It was like she was watching a game or a sports event where there were two teams.

Orion's eyes were wide with panic as he ran and hot on his heels, was Ronan, who looked tired, angry and amused all at once. There was a bulging vein in his temple as he ran after his alpha.

"You're not getting away," Ronan called out, voice ringing with a mix of frustration and mischievous delight.

"Just this once please." Orion begged not to stop at all.

"That was the same thing you said yesterday." Ronan screamed at him.

"Then let's focus on today. Old things have passed away, right?!"

Sophia's mouth twitched, a laugh escaping despite herself. It surprised her, how often she allowed amusement in this place and the sight of Orion, usually so formidable and prideful, reduced to a blur of desperate sprinting was oddly refreshing.

"Running because he's dumb," Sophia quipped under her breath. "Or he just hates paperwork so much, his brains would explode if he stayed still too long."

A rich, warm chuckle came from behind them.

Sophia turned to find an older man watching with keen eyes that sparkled beneath thick silver eyebrows. His hair, peppered with gray but full and well kept, framed a face that was strong without hardness, kind but unyielding.

"Well said," the man said with a friendly nod. "But I'll wager Orion's not just running out of fear or foolishness."

Sophia arched a brow, intrigued despite herself. "Oh? And what makes you say that?"

He smiled a deep, knowing curl of lips unlikely to be found on a man who had lived long without laughter. "Because I'm sure that, dumb or not, he enjoys it. The chase is part of the dance."

Brynhild offered a subtle nod of agreement.

"He enjoys being chased like this?" Sophia asked in surprise.

"Orion loved the burst of adrenaline. Sometimes, he chases it." Brynhild said to her.

"Exactly," the old man said then turned to Sophia, "my name's Caspian," the elder added, extending a hand once Sophia had introduced herself. His grip was firm, reassuring, rich with years of survival in a harsh world.

"Nice to meet you in person, Sophia," he said warmly. "We haven't had the pleasure until now."

Sophia felt the weight of his gaze not judgmental, but measuring, acknowledging her place in the wolf pack's tide.

"Um...do I know you?" Sophia asked him unsure if who this man was.

"Oh, you don't but I know you. Everyone in this pack knows you." He told her.

"She is famous." Brynhild added.

"True, but not as famous as me." Caspian said to her.

Behind them, Orion finally slowed, stopping in the middle of the square, chest heaving but a triumphant grin on his face.

Ronan approached slowly as if scared Orion would bolt again. "Giving up?" He asked Orion.

"Can you give this a rest? Have you seen the paperwork? It's huge!"

"Of course I have you idiot. I went through most of them and the rest just need your stamp of approval."

"That's what you said the last time but that didn't happen." Orion told him.

"It's not my fault you like going through everything again."

"I hate you." Orion said to him, sounding like a child.

"I may not have your ability but I know that's a lie." Ronan said to him.

Sophia couldn't help but watch these two friends with amusement in her eyes. They didn't care that people were watching them at all. Orion opened his mouth to speak again when all of a sudden, his body went tight. Brynhild also stiffened and Sophia was about to ask what's wrong when she heard the sound of a horn.

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

The Alpha's Secret Luna #Chapter 30: shadows of the wild - Read The Alpha's Secret Luna Chapter 30: shadows of the wild

Chapter 29: Shadows of the Wild

The horn's deep, resonant wail cut through the crisp morning air like a blade, echoing off the towering pines and stone walls of the Nightshade compound. It was a sound that pierced the soul, low and ominous, vibrating in Sophia's chest as if the ground itself were rumbling in warning. She froze mid-step, her conversation with Brynhild and Caspian forgotten in an instant. The laughter and chatter of the pack, so lively just moments ago, died away, replaced by a tense, electric silence.

Orion's demeanor shifted immediately like a storm overtaking the clouds, his broad shoulders tensed, his jaw set in a hard line, the easy amusement from the chase with Ronan vanishing as if it had never been.

Ronan mirrored him, his playful grin evaporating into a focused scowl. Even Caspian, who had been all smiles and knowing glances, lost the warmth in his eyes, his face hardening into the mask of a man who had seen too many battles.

Brynhild's hand instinctively went to her belly in a protective stance.

She turned to Caspian with a quick nod, her voice low and urgent. "Take Sophia. Keep her safe."

Sophia blinked, her heart pounding. "What's happening? What's that sound?"

Caspian didn't answer at first, his gaze flicking toward the gate where Orion and Ronan were already breaking into a run, their boots pounding the packed earth like war drums.

Brynhild spared Sophia a brief glance, her expression unyielding. "Go with Caspian. Now."

Without another word, Brynhild moved toward the gate, her stride purposeful despite the weight of her pregnancy. Sophia hesitated, her curiosity igniting like a spark in a dark room. What could make them all react like this? The pack had seemed so unbreakable, so alive with routine and camaraderie. Now, it was transforming before her eyes.

Caspian grasped her arm gently but firmly, pulling her along. "Come on, girl."

There's no time for questions, at least not yet."

As they hurried through the compound, Sophia's eyes darted everywhere, taking in the rapid shift. Pack members who had been chatting idly or tending to chores moments ago were now moving with practiced efficiency. Mothers scooped up children, moving them toward sturdy stone buildings with reinforced doors.

Warriors, hunters and guards alike, grabbed swords and bows from racks hidden in alcoves, strapping on leather armor with swift, fluid motions. The air filled with the metallic tang of weapons being drawn and the low murmur of urgent commands.

It was clear this wasn't their first time. No one panicked; there were no screams or chaos. Instead, it was like a well-rehearsed dance, everyone knew their role. The students Sophia had seen earlier, gathered around Philip with their books, were being ushered inside by adults, their small faces a mix of excitement and solemnity.

One boy, no older than ten, clutched a wooden sword as if ready to join the fight, but an elderly woman gently guided him away, whispering reassurances.

"What's going on?" Sophia demanded again, her voice rising as Caspian led her toward a cluster of homes near the center of the compound.

Her curiosity burned hotter than her fear, why the horn? What danger could make an entire pack snap into action like this? She craned her neck, trying to catch a glimpse of the gate where Orion and Ronan had vanished.

Caspian sighed, his grip on her arm loosening slightly as they reached a sheltered alcove. "The horn means trouble's coming. Could be anything, rogues, beasts, or worse. We've drilled for this since we first settled in Nirvana. Everyone knows what to do, protect the young, arm the strong, and hold the walls."

Sophia's mind raced. "Worse? Like what?" She asked him.

Caspian shot her a sidelong glance, his silver eyebrows knitting together. "Anything at all. It could be in the form of people like us or not. But that doesn't matter right now. You need to get to safety. Orion and Ronan will handle whatever is coming. He's our alpha for a reason."

She wanted to press further, but Caspian's tone brooked no argument. "Stay here," he said, pointing to a low bench against the wall of a sturdy home. "I need to check on something or rather someone." He grumbled. "Don't wander, it's not safe."

Sophia nodded reluctantly, but as soon as Caspian's back turned and he hurried off toward the house, her curiosity won out. The pull was too strong; she couldn't just sit there while the pack mobilized.

Slipping from the alcove, she moved with the flow of guards and hunters streaming toward the gate, keeping to the shadows of buildings to avoid notice. Her heart

hammered, not from fear, but from the thrill of uncovering whatever had set the pack on edge.

At the gate, the scene was a whirlwind of controlled urgency. Orion had already scaled the watchtower, a rickety wooden structure perched atop the compound's outer wall. He gripped a farseer, a long, brass-bound tube etched with faint runes, in one hand, pressing it to his eye as he scanned the horizon. The device, a relic from the pack's early days, magnified distant sights with uncanny clarity, its lenses ground from crystal mined deep in Nirvana's frozen caves.

Below him, Ronan organized the warriors, barking orders with a mix of humor and steel. "Archers to the walls! Spears at the ready, don't let whatever's coming scratch our paint!"

One warrior laughed at that. "Paint? If I remember correctly you said the walls were too beautiful to be painted."

Ronan laughed and shook his head at the warrior. He was calm even with the unknown threat or perhaps he was just making the other warriors calm by being so.

Brynhild stood at the base of the tower, her pregnancy not slowing her as she directed reinforcements to the gates. Ronan helped her ensure all the Warriors were in place and were ready since she couldn't see them. The air hummed with tension, the pack's unity a palpable force.

A young guard, barely out of his teens with tousled brown hair and a freckled face that spoke of inexperience, climbed up to Orion, breathless. "Alpha! It's... it's a Skylur pack. They are coming straight for us. But not alone."

Orion lowered the farseer, his face paling slightly as he processed the sight. Through the lens, he'd seen it, the massive white-furred Skylur lumbering forward, with its pack, its wolf-bear form a nightmare of muscle and fangs.

But trailing beside it was something even more unnatural, a colossal three-headed snake, its scales a iridescent black that gleamed like oil on water. Each head swayed independently, forked tongues tasting the air, eyes glowing with malevolent intelligence.

The beast was a Trihydra, a rare abomination from Nirvana's deepest wilds, known for its venom that could fell a pack in minutes and its solitary nature. Trihydras despised Skylurs, preying on them as food, yet here they were, moving in eerie unison, as if bound by some dark alliance.

Orion's skin prickled, the hair on his arms standing on end. "A Trihydra? With a Skylur?" he muttered, confusion warring with alarm.

They'd just slaughtered a Skylur pack, how was one charging them now? And allied with its natural enemy? Rare beasts like these didn't appear in bulk; something was wrong, something unnatural driving them.

He leaped down from the tower, landing with a thud beside Ronan and Brynhild. "Alert the warriors, it's a Skylur and a Trihydra. They're coming together, straight for the walls."

Ronan's face scrunched up in confusion. "Together? That's impossible. Trihydras eat Skylurs for breakfast."

Orion nodded grimly. "Exactly! I don't understand what's going on. It could be something in the forests, I don't know but we defend our home first. Brynhild, you're in charge here. Hold the gates."

Brynhild's eyes narrowed, her hand resting on her belly for a brief moment before she drew her twin swords. "I've got it."

Orion turned to a young guard at his side, the same freckled boy who'd reported.

"You, run to Madam Tyler at the shrine. Tell her to reinforce the wall charms. Now!"

The boy nodded, eyes wide with fear but determination, and bolted toward the shrine.

Orion glanced at Ronan. "You are with me. We need to rally the hunters, flank them if they breach."

The pack sprang into action, archers nocking arrows on the walls, spears braced against the gates. The air thrummed with tension, the distant roar of the approaching beasts growing louder, a harbinger of chaos.

Meanwhile, Sophia had slipped from Caspian's sight, her curiosity overriding his warnings. She weaved through the throng of warriors, keeping low and using the chaos as cover. The expressions on their faces, tight frowns, clenched jaws, eyes hardened with resolve, only fueled her need to know. What could make them look like that? What danger was so grave it turned this lively pack into a fortress of steel?

She reached the edge of the gate, peering through a gap in the barricade. The sight in the distance stole her breath: the massive Skylur, its white fur rippling like a storm cloud, and beside it, was a snake with three heads hissing in unison.

She had no idea what it was but just seeing the same beast that had almost killed her days ago was enough to strike fear in her.

A hand clamped over her shoulder firmly, "What are you doing here?"

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