

The Chosen Luna: Alpha's Unwanted Daughter by Passion Master

chapter 1

POV: Isla

The family room smelled of pine resin and burned candle wax, a stillness settled over the house that meant everyone in it was exactly where they wanted to be.

Seraphine was mid-sentence, as usual, her voice filling every corner of the room with the ease of someone who had never once needed to raise it to be heard.

Mother's hand rested against her chest. Father sat forward in his chair with his forearms on his knees, his face open in a way I had stopped expecting him to turn toward me years ago.

"—Instructor Renn said he'd never seen footwork that clean on a she-wolf my age. I finished the full circuit in under four minutes."

"You're so gifted, Seraphine," Mother breathed. "You're everything a future Luna should be."

"Seraphine has such natural grace," Father added, nodding. "She's practically destined to be Luna."

Seraphine tossed her hair back — that particular motion, practiced until it looked accidental. She let the compliments settle around her without rushing to collect them, because she had always known they would arrive.

I was born first — eleven minutes before Seraphine, that made the title of Luna mine by every tradition this pack had upheld for generations.

I sat at the edge of the sofa with my spine straight and my hands folded in my lap, the firstborn twin who had been written out of her own story so gradually she'd almost missed it happening.

"Anyone could be good with that much practice," I said, keeping my voice low and even.

Father's scoff was sharp. "No, Isla. This takes talent. Real talent." His eyes moved to mine and stayed — that settled, resigned look he wore whenever he remembered I existed. "Maybe you should try harder. Learn from your sister."

I pressed my back teeth together and kept still. There was no version of answering that didn't cost something I had already spent too much of, and I had stopped wasting what little I had left.

Seraphine turned that smile on me — slow, patient, certain of itself. "Maybe if you stopped daydreaming," she said, each word precisely placed, "you'd be decent at something."

I held her gaze one beat longer than she expected. Then I looked away — not because she'd won anything, but because she was not worth the continued effort.

She had been in my room again last week. I found the journal under my mattress, three pages torn out clean with unhurried strips.

The notes left behind were written in her looping, careful hand. You're worthless. No one will ever want you. I read each one once, then I folded them and fed them into the candle flame without looking away.

I did not let myself feel any of it until I was alone in the dark, and even then I kept it brief. That was the rule I had built for myself over years of practice: never let them see where it lands, never show them the mark.

Seraphine's hatred had never needed a complicated reason. I was firstborn but she had spent every year since trying to dismantle what that meant.

Not because she needed the title. Because I had it first, and she couldn't stand that anything in this world had ever belonged to me before it belonged to her.

I carried that knowledge out with me that evening through the side door, into the cool dark, and stood in the grass behind the packhouse until the tightness in my chest finally loosened.

I felt it then — something beneath my sternum, a pull that had been building for three days now, low and steady and impossible to assign a source to.

My fated mate was out there, somewhere inside Midnight Crest's territory, and the Moon Goddess had been tugging at me toward them for days.

I pressed my palm flat to my chest and stood there in the night air, and for the first time in longer than I could count, I let myself believe something good was close.

That I had earned something good and real, even if no one around me had ever thought to say so.

But I was wrong. I wouldn't understand how completely until two days later, when I walked into the main hall and felt the ground shift beneath everything I had finally allowed myself to hope for.

I felt him before I saw him — the pull hitting me mid-step, sudden and total, stopping my feet before my mind could catch up.

The main hall was packed with warriors, loud with conversation, thick with the smell of sweat and iron drifting in from the training yards outside.

My eyes moved through the crowd until they found him. Kael. Broad-shouldered, serious-faced, built from years of discipline that showed even when he was standing still with his arms at his sides.

The certainty dropped through me clean and absolute. Mine. Not chosen, not considered — just present, solid, the same as a heartbeat I hadn't asked for and couldn't stop.

I had taken exactly one step toward him when Seraphine's voice cut across the room.

"Kael! There you are." Her arm slid through his before he'd had time to register her arrival, easy and practiced, and Kael looked down at her with an expression that eased open in a way I had never once seen on his face before.

He laughed at something she whispered — a real, quiet, surprised sound — and his arm settled around her waist and stayed there.

The pull in my chest turned from recognition into something with edges, something that pressed outward and had nowhere to go.

"Kael." His name left my mouth before I could arrange it properly — thin, too open, already wrong.

He looked up. His expression was polite and arranged, the face given to someone unfamiliar in a crowded room. "Isla," he said, a small nod, and returned his attention to Seraphine.

Seraphine turned to me wearing the same smile she'd worn in the family room — patient, certain, already counting what it had won. "Oh, Isla, didn't you know?"

She let her fingers trail along Kael's chest, slow and deliberate, her eyes never once leaving my face. "Kael and I have been talking about our future. Looks like he's my mate."

My jaw locked. The bond-pull in my chest didn't vanish — it twisted instead, burning against my ribs from the inside, a live thing with nowhere left to go.

"No," I said, and I held my voice steady through sheer force. "You can't. He's mine."

Something shifted behind Seraphine's eyes — the amusement sharpening, acquiring an edge. "Yours?" The word came out soft, almost curious, before the smile widened and settled back into place.

Her gaze moved over me slowly, from the crescent mark on my cheek to my feet — the look someone gives a thing they have already decided needs no further consideration. "Did you really think someone like him would want you?"