

The Chosen Luna: Alpha's Unwanted Daughter

Chapter 7

POV: Seraphine

I had been performing grief since I was old enough to understand what it bought me.

I knew every register of it. The right degree of tremor in the lower lip. The precise angle at which to drop the chin so the eyes look wet without actually crying.

The half-second delay before speaking, as though the words extract a price. I had been practicing since I was nine, standing in the dark after Isla won a footwork assessment and Instructor Renn had said her name twice in one session.

The specific clarity that humiliation delivers had told me then: no one could ever know how much it mattered to me.

The problem with being a twin is that the world insists on seeing you as a set. A matched pair. Both daughters. The elder and the younger.

Isla had been born first. Eleven minutes before me, eleven minutes that gave her the heir title by every tradition this pack had held for generations.

I had arrived second, quieter in their arms, and the world had immediately begun building a story in which I was the one running to catch up.

That was what I could not stand. Not her ambition. She had none. Not her training. What I could not stand was that she existed in rooms. That she occupied space in a way people registered without instruction.

The crescent mark on her cheek, the one she had been born with and I had not, made strangers ask about her first.

I was the better daughter. I had always been the better daughter. I simply had to spend every day of my life making certain this pack knew it too.

So when the packhouse erupted before breakfast and the word moved through every corridor — Isla was gone — I stood in the center of the main hall with my hand pressed to my chest and my eyes performing exactly the right kind of pain.

"She wouldn't just leave." I pressed a trembling hand to my chest, voice soft, breaking in just the right places. "She must be scared... confused."

Warriors clustered near the walls. Elders moved in tight pairs through the corridors. Servants read the air and stayed close to the edges of the room.

I stood where everyone could see me and let the silence confirm what my expression was telling them.

Inside, underneath the performance and the careful expression and the pressed-flat emotion, the only thing I felt was clean.

Isla was gone. Finally. The shadow that had followed me for years, the pitiful thing who had clung to hope despite being unwanted, gone.

"What the hell did you do, Seraphine?!" Garrick's voice, my father's voice cracked across the hall, sharp and without warning.

He crossed the room in six strides, fists tight at his sides, his eyes wrong in a way I clocked immediately. Too bright. Too personal. "She was supposed to serve me!"

I pressed my expression into soft devastation and kept it there. "Father," I murmured, voice careful. "I didn't think she had it in her. She was always so... pathetic."

"You let her slip through our fingers!" He was pacing now, the rage rolling off him in waves. Not performed. Raw and real. "After everything. Do you have any idea what you've cost me?"

"Then you're a fool." His voice dropped, which was worse than the volume had been.

My nails cut into my palms. It was not often his fury was aimed anywhere but at me, and I took what I could from that.

"She'll come back." I kept it light. Unbothered. The tone of someone commenting on the weather.

He was not listening. He never listened when a thing had slipped from his control.

"She was getting bolder," he muttered, jaw so tight the muscle in his cheek twitched. "I should have broken her sooner."

I watched him pace, and a quality in his register snagged at my attention. I had watched Garrick's anger my entire life.

I knew his fury when a warrior disobeyed, when a border was challenged, when pack business went sideways.

This was none of those. This was the anger of a man who had lost possession of a thing, and the distinction mattered.

"Why do you care so much that she's gone?" My voice was slow, measured, curiosity pushing through the cracks of my usual indifference.

The room went still. My father stilled with it, his expression pulling tight in a way that was not quite anger and not quite anything I had a name for.

"She belongs to me." The words left him before the mask could catch them. Raw and unguarded. The voice of a man who had forgotten, for one unguarded second, that I was still in the room.

The silence that followed was a different kind of silence entirely.

He heard it too — the shape of what he had just handed me. His jaw closed. His eyes found mine, and what moved through them was not a father reading his daughter's face.

Then, finally, the answer arrived: "Other packs can use her against us. Don't you understand?"

A practiced answer. Pre-loaded. Arriving without the normal lag of genuine thought.

My mother's voice arrived then, dry and unhurried, carrying the particular weight of a woman who has been waiting for exactly this opening.

Lenora had not moved from her chair. She sat the way she always sat, with the composure of a woman who understood that stillness is its own form of power.

She looked at Garrick with her head tilted at a precise angle, her expression carrying a charge I had never seen directed at him before. Contempt, yes. But underneath it, leverage.

"She was never meant to survive," Lenora murmured, and the words settled into the room like a dropped stone.

"Get out of the room, Seraphine." My father's voice. Flat. Final. A current underneath it that made the skin on the back of my neck draw tight.

I left. I closed the door with exactly the right pressure, firm enough to be heard, not so firm it looked deliberate, and I stood in the corridor and I listened.

The crash came two seconds later. The specific dense sound of a body meeting a wall by force. Then my father's voice, low and dangerous and stripped of all pretense.

"What did you do, Lenora?" His voice, low and dangerous and stripped of all pretense. A beat of silence. "You know she's mine."

Lenora's voice came back ragged at the edges, threaded through with amusement.

"Y-you're a sick bastard." The sound of nails on skin. "Kill me, and the whole pack will know just how fucking disgusting you are — that you've been fantasizing about Isla like the pathetic monster you are."

A long silence stretched through the wall between us. Then the grip loosened. I heard it in the shift of her breathing, the sound of a person dropped.

No trackers were dispatched. No warriors were sent to the borders. By morning the story had been written and distributed the way all official stories move, not announced, simply available.

Repeated until it becomes the only version. Isla had abandoned them. Weak and ungrateful. Unable to bear the weight of the pack's decision.

Kael received the news quietly. "She never really loved you, Kael," I murmured against his throat later that night, my fingers trailing down his chest.

"She only wanted what she thought she deserved." He exhaled, and the story settled into him.

Because what I had wanted was not for Isla to disappear. I had wanted to have been born alone, undivided, without her running alongside me as a footnote that refused to stay small.

She was gone, and I was still a twin. The category still had two entries, even with one of them missing. I had not erased her at all. I had given her every reason to come back harder.