

Alpha Damien & His Troublemaker

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 131

[2,072 words]

Chapter 131

Evelyn

Huh?

What did he just say?

65 vouchers

I blinked, my mind scrambling as I tried to process the words that had just left Silas's mouth. For a brief moment, I thought I might have misheard him. My ears were ringing, my heart pounding too loudly in my chest, surely I imagined it. I glanced around the room, desperately searching for confirmation in the faces of the others. But I didn't imagine it.

Emily looked as though someone had slapped her across the face. Arthur's smug expression cracked instantly, shock flashing through his eyes before he could hide it. Even the servants who had been pretending not to exist were staring openly now, frozen in place.

They heard it too. And oh gods, so did I.

Mate.

Silas, my lady Selene's most trusted warrior, the man who had always stood like an unbreakable wall in front of danger, had just called me his mate.

The realization hit me all at once.

1

My eyes widened, my breath catching sharply in my throat as I sucked in a gasp I couldn't stop. My heart skipped so hard it felt like it stumbled, and suddenly I didn't know where to look or what expression I was supposed to have on my face. I stared at Silas as if seeing him for the very first time, my thoughts spiraling wildly out of control.

In my original pack, before I came to the Mooncrest pack, women like me were practically wolfless.

Even when we came of age, our wolves never awakened. It was in my blood, something I had grown up knowing and accepting. Because of that, most women didn't end up with a man because he was their mate. Bonds were formed through arranged marriages, political convenience, or, if you were lucky, true love. I had always thought I would be one of those

women too.

I never once expected to have a mate.

The only comfort women like me had was that even without a wolf, our mates could still recognize us by scent. Our bodies would still respond to them, but the cruel downside was this, most men didn't want a weak, wolfless woman. Even if they knew she was their mate, many would turn away, refusing to mark her, pretending fate had made a mistake.

I had never allowed myself to hope. And yet, of all people, Silas.

He ignored everyone else in the room, as if Arthur, Emily, and the rest didn't exist at all, and turned fully toward me. His voice softened in a way I had never heard before. "Evelyn," he asked, "are you okay?"

I blinked again, snapping out of my daze, my cheeks burning as I realized I was just standing there staring at him. I nodded quickly. "Y-yes," I managed to say, my voice unsteady. "I'm fine."

He studied my face carefully, his sharp eyes scanning me for injuries, and anything out of place. When he seemed satisfied that I was truly unharmed, he gave a small nod and turned back to Arthur.

The moment his gaze landed on the sword in Arthur's hand, the temperature in the room seemed to drop.

Silas's expression darkened completely, all softness vanishing as his voice turned cold. "Harm even a single hair on her head," he said slowly, "and I will take yours."

Chapter 131

Arthur's face drained of color. He tried to hide it, but I saw the flicker of fear that crossed his eyes. Whatever bravado he wore now, the memory of the last time Silas had beaten him was clearly still carved into his bones. Still, when he noticed everyone watching, he forced a smile onto his face, masking his fear with mockery.

“Well, well,” Arthur said, though his voice wavered just a bit. “What an interesting plot twist. Who would’ve thought the two servants of that crazy girl would turn out to be mates?”

My anger flared instantly.

“You bastard.” I spat, taking a step forward without thinking, my fists clenching as I raised my hand, fully prepared to punch him, but Silas caught me easily, his grip firm around my arm, stopping me without effort.

I looked up at him. He appeared calm on the surface, but I wasn’t stupid. I knew him well enough to recognize that kind of stillness, he was furious. Out of everyone in the world, just like me, Lady Selene was the most important person to him.

I inhaled deeply and forced myself to stop, swallowing the rage burning my chest.

Silas released me gently and stepped forward instead.

A suffocating, deadly aura rolled off him, filling the room. Emily’s confident posture crumbled instantly. She stumbled back a step, Arthur following her instinctively as if his body knew better than his pride.

Arthur tightened his grip on his sword, his knuckles turning white. “W-what do you think you’re doing?” he demanded, his voice betraying him. “Are you going to hit me again?”

Silas didn’t answer.

He simply took another step forward.

Emily’s eyes widened in terror. “D-don’t come any closer!” she cried. “Do you think hurting us will make things better? If you lay a hand on Arthur or me, you’ll both die!”

Silas didn’t even acknowledge Emily’s warning.

He took another step forward. Emily and Arthur both stiffened, fear flashing openly across their faces this time. Everyone knew that Silas was a black wolf, he was a dangerous person.

Just when I thought he was about to move, and strike, he dropped to his knees. The sound of it echoed in the room.

My breath left me in a sharp gasp, my eyes widening as I stared at him, my mind refusing to accept what I was seeing. “Silas

Everyone froze. Arthur looked as though the world had just flipped upside down. His mouth fell open slightly before twisting into disbelief. “What do you think you’re doing?”

Silas lowered his head slightly, his posture calm, "Spare her. I will take her punishment."

My heart lurched painfully in my chest.

"No!" I shook my head violently as I rushed toward him. "No, don't. Why would you do that? I didn't do anything wrong in the first place! Why should you take my punishment?"

Silas looked at me then, his gaze deep and unreadable. For a moment, something flickered in his eyes before he turned his head away.

"It's not about right or wrong," he said quietly. "They already decided your fate the moment they set the trap. Whether you're innocent doesn't matter."

My hands clenched into fists, my nails biting into my palms. "But-"

11:29 Wed, Feb 4

Chapter 131

55 von

He cut me off gently, his voice lowering further. "Lady Selene told me my duty was to protect you. She said she could protect herself." He paused, then added, "If she returns and doesn't see you, she will be disappointed in me. I don't want

that."

His words hit harder than any blow ever could. My chest tightened painfully, my throat closing as guilt and fear tangled together until I could barely breathe. I wanted to argue, scream, and tell him this wasn't fair, but no words would come.

Arthur stared at Silas for a long moment before a cruel smile crept across his face. "Fine," he said, his tone dripping with satisfaction.

Emily frowned sharply and turned to him. "Hey, I said the girl, not him."

Arthur didn't even look at her. "It doesn't matter who it is," he replied casually. "As long as someone close to Lady Selene gets hurt, that's what Lady Sienna wanted, right?"

Emily hesitated. "Yes, but-"

Arthur waved her off. "Then I'm not going against her wishes." He raised his sword, the blade catching the light as his grin twisted into something vicious. "I'm just making it more fun."

His eyes burned with madness as he looked down at Silas. "Let's see how well you'll hold a sword after this, hm? You won't look so smug then."

Silas didn't flinch or beg. He simply raised his hand, offering it up without hesitation.

My breaths came fast and shallow as I shook my head frantically, my legs giving out beneath me. I dropped to my knees beside him, my hands trembling as I pressed them to the ground. "No... please," I cried, my voice cracking. "Don't do this. I'll do anything. Anything you want. Just don't hurt him."

Tears blurred my vision as I forced the words out. "It was me. I stole the necklace. Punish me instead. Please."

Arthur didn't even spare me a glance. His eyes were locked on Silas. He had never cared about the necklace. Silas was always his target. And now that he finally had him within reach, he wasn't going to let go.

He brought the sword down, and in that exact moment it felt as though the entire room froze.

I wanted to throw myself forward and stand between Silas and that descending blade, but before I could even shift my weight Silas's arm wrapped tightly around my waist, pulling me back against him with his strength and forcing me down as if he had already decided that no matter what happened next, I would not be the one taking the blow.

The sword descended faster, cutting through the air with a sharp whistle, and I squeezed my eyes shut so tightly that my

vision burned.

Oh gods, no. Someone please help, anyone at all, I don't care who it is anymore. My lady, please, if you can hear me, help!

Just as everyone believed the blade would finally fall and blood would stain the floor, a lazy, almost bored voice drifted through the room, cutting through the tension.

"Hm, just when my sleep was getting good."

The room fell into a suffocating silence, and the sound of metal cutting into flesh never came.

My chest tightened painfully as I struggled to breathe again, my lungs burning as I forced air back into them. I slowly opened my eyes, half-expecting to see blood pooling on the ground. Instead, Lucas stood calmly in front of us, as if he had just woken up. He was tall and unbothered, his posture loose, golden eyes looking down at me with

complete disinterest, as though everything unfolding around us was nothing more than an inconvenience rather than a near execution.

11:30 Wed, Feb 4

Chapter 131

T

83 T

56 vouchers

Arthur's sword was still raised in the air, frozen in place, and at first I thought perhaps Arthur himself had stopped, but when I looked closer my entire body went cold with shock.

Lucas was holding the blade with just two fingers gripping the sharp tip of the sword effortlessly.

Arthur's arm trembled violently as he tried to force the blade down, his face twisting with fear and disbelief, but no matter how much strength he poured into it, the sword would not move even a fraction of an inch.

Lucas tilted his head slightly, his gaze drifting back to me, his tone lazy in that infuriatingly familiar way.

"I'm hungry," he said casually, golden eyes lingering on me. "When are you going to feed me, Evelyn?"

10

No one spoke. No one even dared to breathe.

I stared at him, my mind scrambling desperately to process what I was seeing. Lucas, my lady's bodyguard. The man who always looked half-asleep, perpetually annoyed, as if the world itself bored him, had just stopped a sword with his bare

hands.

Just then, my lady's words echoed clearly in my mind.

"So what if those steps don't work?" I had asked her back then. "What if I still can't catch the wild animal?"

My lady had smiled, an almost wicked smirk curling at her lips.

“Don’t worry about that,” she had said calmly. “If none of my tricks work, I’ll give you a cheat.”

“A cheat?”

She nodded, eyes gleaming. “Yes. A very good one.” She leaned closer, that same sly smile spreading across her face. “If you can’t beat a wild animal, just make use of a far more powerful one.

Back then, I hadn’t understood. But now, as I stared at Lucas, I finally did.

My lady had been wrong, this man wasn’t just a wild animal. He was a monster.

AD

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 132

[1,154 words]

Chapter 132

Lucas

I had never liked werewolves.

↻

57

55 vouchers

To me, they were weak creatures, fragile, loud, and far too easy to crush beneath one’s heel. For the longest time, I never understood why the Moon Goddess had even bothered creating them in the first place. It felt wasteful, almost insulting, for a goddess

to shape beings so limited, and bound by instinct and emotion. Even now, when I thought about it, the question still lingered in my mind.

Why create something so weak?

That had been what I believed for a very long time, until I realized that I was wrong.

Werewolves as a whole might be unimpressive, but there were exceptions among them, anomalies that defied the rule. There were some who were genuinely strong, strong enough to rival beings like me, gods who had existed since before their world had taken shape. The powerful alpha who had caught my interest long ago was one such exception. Then there was the Moonborn, the one who had actually managed to trap me inside a box, an act that still irritated me whenever I thought about it. And now, there was her.

That nonchalant, infuriatingly fearless woman who did whatever she wanted, whenever she wanted, without caring who stood in her way.

Normally, I should have grown bored of staying among werewolves by now. I should have returned to my cave, back to silence and solitude, where nothing annoyed me and nothing demanded my attention. Yet, unexpectedly, I wasn't bored at all. Staying here was calm. Especially when that woman servant kept feeding me, bringing food as if it were the most natural thing in the world to serve a stranger who lounged around all day doing nothing.

I wasn't sure whether I was more annoyed that Damien had taken Selene away, or that she hadn't called for me even once since leaving. She was out there, doing whatever she pleased, while I was stuck here, being fed and watched like some oversized pet.

I tilted my head slightly, my thoughts drifting in a completely different direction. I wondered what kind of food they had in the Crimson Pack. If their warriors were that strong, then surely their food must be interesting too.

"L-Lucas..."

A soft voice called my name, pulling me out of my completely important thoughts about food. I looked down to see Evelyn staring at me, her eyes wide with disbelief. Beside her, Silas looked just as shocked, as if they couldn't quite believe what they had just witnessed.

I sighed quietly.

They must have been taken aback. I always spent my time eating or lazily lying around, doing absolutely nothing of value. It made sense that they would expect nothing from me. Even Silas, who was usually far more composed, was staring at me as if I had suddenly grown another head.

“You don’t have to look at me like that,” I said, my

That, of course, did nothing to stop them from staring.

flat.

I looked between the two of them, my expression thoughtful. Normally, I didn’t like helping werewolves. I was the god of beasts, werewolves had nothing to do with me. They weren’t my responsibility, nor were they within my domain. And yet, if I helped them, Selene would definitely be happy when she came back and saw them safe. She would probably reward me with a ridiculous amount of tasty things.

My lips curved slightly at the thought.

20:13 Fri, Feb 6 DOM

Chapter 132

ꠄ

357

55 vouchers

And besides, even if I didn’t want to admit it, I didn’t want anything bad to happen to these two. They had treated me well, without knowing who, or what, I truly was. That alone deserved repayment.

I turned my gaze to Silas, my eyes sharp as I spoke. “Why did you give up?” I asked calmly. “With your strength, you could have defeated him. Are you that weak-minded?”

Silas flinched at my words, his head lowering as his hands clenched tightly at his sides. After a moment, he spoke, his voice controlled. “I didn’t give up,” he said. “I just knew that fighting back would make things worse. They would have hurt Evelyn if I tried.”

I glanced at Evelyn.

Her face flushed red immediately, clearly not expecting that answer. She looked startled, as if the realization had only just struck her, that Silas had chosen restraint, not because he was weak, but because of her.

I raised an eyebrow, studying the two of them in silence.

I still didn’t fully understand it. Why someone would hold back their strength, willingly placing themselves at a disadvantage, all for another person. Perhaps it was because I had never had someone important enough to protect, someone worth risking my life for.

I hummed quietly, my thoughts drifting.

Hmmmm...

Maybe one day, I would.

“Arthur, what happened? Why can’t you move your sword?”

Someone spoke behind me, their voice sharp with confusion, and the man standing in front of me stiffened as if only now realizing that something was very wrong. Arthur’s grip tightened around the hilt of his sword, his knuckles turning white as he forced a strained laugh.

“I-I can,” he said quickly, though there was panic creeping into his tone. “I just don’t want to cut down an innocent man.”

He tried to pull the blade back, to wrench it out of my grasp as if that were even possible, but I didn’t let it go. The metal trembled uselessly in my hand, completely under my control. Arthur’s expression twisted, fear giving way to anger as humiliation burned through him.

“You!” he snapped. “How dare you! Do you even know who I am?”

At that, my golden eyes flickered, a sharp gleam flashing through them as I finally turned my head to look at him properly. The moment our gazes met, Arthur flinched so violently that it was almost amusing. His body reacted before his mind could catch up, instincts screaming at him that he had just made a terrible mistake.

“Do I know who you are?” I repeated calmly, my voice low and cold. “Why would I know a worthless insect like you?”

A slow, dangerous smile curved my lips as I leaned slightly closer. “The only reason I would ever know someone like you is when I’m about to take your life. And honestly, I don’t see why I shouldn’t do that now.”

Arthur’s face drained of color so fast it was almost

pressive. Before he could even form another word, the sword in my hand shattered with a sharp, echoing crack, breaking into countless pieces that clattered uselessly to the floor. A collective gasp swept through the room, shock freezing everyone in place.

20:13 Fri, Feb 6 M

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 133

[1,121 words]

Chapter 133

5

55 vouchers

Lucas

Before anyone could react, I wrapped one hand around Arthur's neck and lifted him effortlessly off the ground. His legs dangled helplessly in the air as his face turned a deep, ugly red, his mouth opening and closing as he desperately gasped for air that wouldn't come.

People stumbled back in terror, creating distance as if afraid my presence alone would kill them. Even Silas and Evelyn looked stunned, their eyes wide as they stared at me.

Silas was the first to move, jumping to his feet as he looked at me with alarm. "Lucas," he said urgently, "what are you doing?"

I didn't even glance at him. "I'm about to send him to the underworld," I replied indifferently, as if discussing something trivial.

Evelyn stood up as well, her hands clenched tightly at her sides. "No," she said, her voice shaking but firm. "You can't do that."

The woman standing beside Arthur nodded frantically, her fear barely contained. "Y-Yes, Lady Sienna won't let this matter go," she added quickly, as if invoking a name might somehow save him.

I let out a soft, amused laugh. "I can't do that?" I echoed, genuinely entertained by the idea. How amusing it was, these people telling a phoenix what he could and couldn't do.

My grip tightened around Arthur's neck, his struggles growing weaker. "I don't care about the consequences," I said calmly. "And I certainly don't care what they'll try to do. If they dare act, I'll simply take all their lives."

A deep, oppressive aura erupted from me, heavy with killing intent, filling the room. People groaned in pain as it pressed down on them, one by one collapsing to their knees, unable to breathe properly under the pressure, everyone except Silas and Evelyn, whom I deliberately spared.

Silas opened his mouth, clearly about to argue again, but before he could say a word, Evelyn spoke.

"If you kill him," she said sharply, "no more food for you."

I froze.

The aura vanished instantly, as if it had never existed. I released Arthur without hesitation, letting him crash to the floor in a coughing, gasping heap. The room seemed to exhale all at once as people finally caught their breath, fear still etched deep into their faces.

I looked down at the trembling man, then glanced away, clicking my tongue softly.

...How troublesome.

"Well," I said casually, "I guess I'll be having a lot to eat then."

Silas stared at me like I had suddenly grown another head, clearly still trying to process the whiplash between my killing intent and my current relaxed mood. Evelyn, on the other hand, merely shook her head, a familiar look of resignation crossing her face.

"As expected," she said quietly. "Food really is your weakness."

Arthur was still on the floor, gasping desperately for air, his chest heaving violently as he tried to recover from the brink of

20:1 Fri, Feb

Chapter 133

E55 vouchers

death. The woman rushed to his side, crouching down to check on him in a panic. When she realized he was still alive, relief flashed through her eyes, only to be replaced by pure hatred as she glared up at me.

“You,” she snapped, her voice trembling with fury. “Just you wait. I’ll make sure you regret this. Lady Sienna-”

“Stop.”

Arthur grabbed her wrist with shaking fingers before she could finish. She turned to him in disbelief, but when she saw the terror in his eyes, her expression faltered.

“Let’s leave,” Arthur said hoarsely, his voice barely holding together.

She frowned. “Huh? Why?”

Arthur swallowed hard, his gaze flicking toward me for only a fraction of a second before he looked away again. “W-we can never bully them,” he whispered. “That man... he’s more dangerous than anyone I’ve ever seen in my life. Let’s leave. Now.”

The woman hesitated, then slowly nodded, fear finally outweighing her anger. Together, they struggled to their feet and left, followed quickly by the others who had been watching, none of them daring to linger any longer.

Evelyn blinked in shock, watching them disappear. “Woah... they really left. I didn’t expect that.”

“Me neither,” Silas admitted, still looking stunned.

I ignored the aftermath entirely, stretching my arms above my head with a lazy yawn. “Now then,” I said, turning my attention back to what actually mattered, “you can feed me, Evelyn.”

She looked at me for a moment, and instead of her usual wary frown, she smiled warmly.

“Yes,” she said. “I’ll feed you as much as you want, Lucas.”

I glanced between her and Silas, something unfamiliar stirring faintly in my chest.

Well, maybe not all werewolves were bad after all.

And yet, even as I settled back into comfort, my thoughts drifted unwillingly to that troublesome woman.

I wondered what kind of chaos she was causing now.

Ian

I leaned against the wall, my posture relaxed as I observed the scene unfolding before me. My expression remained unreadable, calm to the point of indifference, yet there was a brief flash of interest in my eyes that I did not bother to hide.

“That man,” I said slowly, my voice even, “who brought him here?”

Cross was still breathing hard, the lingering pressure of that overwhelming aura clearly having taken its toll on him. He glanced at me, noticing how unaffected I was, and muttered under his breath, “As expected, you’re not affected at all.”

“It was Selene.” He said louder.

“I see.” My tone was calm, but my thoughts were already racing far ahead.

So it really was her.

It seemed my little sister was far more dangerous, and far more interesting, than she let the world believe. To think she would drag something so terrifying into the temple, all while wearing that harmless façade, stirred something close to

20:14 Fri, Feb 6 M.

Chapter 133

amusement within me.

How amusing.

5)

57

55 vouchers

I pushed myself off the wall and straightened. “While I continue searching for Selene,” I said, “make sure no one bullies her people.”

Cross immediately nodded. “And Lady Sienna’s servants?”

“Give them one hundred beatings for this incident,” I replied without hesitation.

“Yes, brother,” Cross said, bowing his head.

I turned and walked away, my steps unhurried but resolute. I was obsessed with my little sister, and I would rather die than become someone she hated because I failed to protect what mattered to her.

From this moment onward, no one would harm my precious sister, or those she cared about.

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 134

[2,004 words]

Chapter 134

Selene

59

55 vouchers

I rubbed my earlobe slowly, an unconscious habit I always had whenever something felt off but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. There was a strange itch beneath my skin, like someone, somewhere, was thinking about me a little too intensely.

Beside me, Chloe noticed the small movement and tilted her head, her brows knitting together in concern.

“Is there something wrong?” she asked softly.

I shrugged, letting my hand fall back to my side as if it meant nothing. “I have no idea,” I replied casually. “Maybe some people at home can’t forget me.”

Chloe blinked and looked at me with curiosity. “At home?” she repeated. “Do you live far from the arena?”

I glanced at her and nodded slightly. “Yeah. Something like that, I live really far away.”

Her expression softened immediately, and a warm smile spread across her face, her cheeks slowly turning a rosy red. “Don’t worry, Noah,” she said with confidence. “We’ll get out of here alive, and you’ll see your family soon. I’m sure they’ll be really happy to see you too.”

She hesitated for a moment before adding, almost shyly, “You’re such a good person after all.”

I didn’t respond right away. Instead, my lips curled upward faintly as a thought crossed my mind. Yes, they will be very happy to see me. I mused darkly, because when I come back, their lives are going to get so much worse.

It was interesting, really, how easily Chloe had decided I was a good person. That was how the world worked, after all. If you were kind to someone, you were good. If you were cruel to them, you were bad. It was a simple, and convenient logic. By that reasoning, Adrian being cruel to me didn’t necessarily make him a bad person, at least not in the eyes of the world. But Sienna? She was a terrible person, through and through, and no amount of justification would ever change that.

In the end, I didn’t actually care who the world labeled as good or bad. Adrian and Sienna were both bad to me, and that was all that mattered. And because of that, they were going to pay for what they did.

When I was given another chance in my tenth life, I didn’t want to rush my revenge. I told myself I would take it slow, start with small flies, strip things away piece by piece, and savor every step of it instead of burning everything down at once.

“Noah?” Chloe’s voice pulled me out of my thoughts. “Are you okay? Did I say something wrong?”

I looked at her and shook my head lightly. “Nothing. I was just thinking.”

I turned away from her then, effectively ending the conversation, and lifted my gaze toward the arena ahead of us, only to freeze in place, completely taken aback

I had thought the arena was massive from the outside, but seeing it from within was an entirely different matter. The scale of it was overwhelming. It was so enormous that it could easily pay for a small pack territory all on its own, stretching wide and far, filled with towering stands and open space that seemed to swallow people whole.

I tilted my head slightly. Just how big is the Crimson Pack if even their arena is this monstrous!

Seeing the stunned expression on my face, Chlor let out a breathy laugh. "It's so big," she said in awe, her eyes shining as she

took it all in.

I nodded silently, my gaze sweeping across the arena as I absorbed every detail.

While Chloe looked around excitedly, barely able to contain herself, a voice suddenly broke through the hum of the crowd.

C

Chapter 134

"Oh my goddess... am I dreaming?" the voice exclaimed. "It's even bigger than I thought it would be!"

Both Chloe and I paused and turned around at the same time.

55 vouche

A young boy stood a short distance away from us, glasses perched slightly crooked on his nose, his eyes darting everywhere as if he didn't know where to look first. He looked completely overwhelmed, like a lost puppy dropped into the middle of chaos.

"I can't believe I'm finally here," he continued, mostly talking to himself. "Last time I couldn't participate because I was too young, but now I can finally join. This is so exciting."

Chloe smiled at him gently. "Um... I'm sorry to ask," she said politely, "but how old are you?"

I glanced at Chloe. Ever since we entered the arena, she had been avoiding people like the plague. Even when others approached her, especially after realizing how wealthy she was, she refused to engage. Some of them, clearly confident in their strength, had even offered to be her bodyguards, but she turned them all down without hesitation, barely meeting their eyes.

Sometimes, it almost felt like Chloe was deliberately trying too hard to keep people from finding out something about her. The way she avoided eye contact, the way she rejected help even when it was clearly offered with good intentions, it was subtle, but noticeable if you paid attention. It was honestly a little strange, but I didn't dwell on it for long.

Whatever secret she was hiding wasn't my business, and I had enough things of my own to worry about.

The boy flinched slightly when Chloe spoke, clearly not expecting someone to address him, and then turned around to look at us properly. The moment his eyes landed on me, his tense posture visibly relaxed, and a bright smile spread across his face as he walked toward me with quick, eager steps, almost like an excited puppy that had just recognized someone familiar.

"It's you," he said, his voice filled with excitement.

I tilted my head, confused. "It's me?" I repeated.

He nodded enthusiastically. "Yes. You were the person who fought those bad guys outside."

Booked at him for a brief moment before nodding. "Yes, that was me." Then, unable to stop myself, I crossed my arms and studied him more carefully before asking, "How old are you?"

The boy glanced between me and Chloe before answering proudly, "I'm twelve years old."

Most things in this world didn't surprise me anymore, but that did. I blinked once, then again, before staring at him properly. "You're twelve?"

He nodded again. "Yes"

"You've got to be kidding me, I muttered. "And they allowed you in here?"

Chloe answered before he could, her voice calm. "The age limit to qualify is twelve years old."

I let out a long sigh. Even back when I was a general, countless people, men and women alike, had begged to join my ranks. but I had always been firm about my rules. They had to be at least twenty years old and skilled enough to survive. I never wanted young people throwing their lives away for glory or pride. And now, here they were, allowing children into something this brutal

As if he could hear my thoughts, the boy straightened his back and said with surprising firmness, "It doesn't matter how young I am. I'm capable, so I'll survive."

I studied him quietly for a moment before nodding. "I see" I turned slightly toward Chloe. "Well then, we'll take our leave

now."

Chapter 134

55 vouchers

Just as I was about to walk away, the boy quickly stepped in front of me. "Wait," he said. "Since you're so awesome, and you two seem new here, let me tell you how things work."

I raised an eyebrow. "Didn't you just say you're new too?"

He nodded without hesitation. "Yes, but I've researched every fight that has happened here. I know how everything works. Want me to explain?"

I glanced at Chloe, who looked back at me as if waiting for my decision. I didn't know what the boy really wanted, but information was never a bad thing to have. After a moment, I nodded. "Go ahead."

He beamed. "My name is Miles, by the way."

I nodded again.

"There are two main parts of the arena. The inner walls, where we are right now, and the outer walls, where the real fights take place. We'll stay here inside during our time at the arena, but when it's time to fight, we'll be taken to the outer walls, where everyone can watch. That's also where the winners are decided."

That didn't sound too bad.

Chloe spoke up then. "When you say we're staying here... are there rooms?"

Miles nodded eagerly. "Yes. There are rooms, but they vary a lot. And here's the thing, so it's fair, participants have to compete to determine who gets the best rooms. It changes every year, so I wonder what it'll be like this time."

As he finished speaking, a beautiful woman stepped forward, instantly drawing everyone's attention. The moment I saw her recognition hit me immediately.

She was the same woman who had hosted the auction. If she was here now, then there was no doubt about it, she was the host of the Crimson Warrior Rite.

The moment the woman stepped forward, the entire arena seemed to fall into silence, as if everyone had collectively forgotten how to breathe. Heads turned in unison, eyes widening as they took in her beauty, elegance, and the authority she carried with every step. She didn't need to raise her voice or demand attention, her presence alone commanded it.

She smiled, a calm curve of her lips, and spoke clearly, her voice carrying across the vast arena,

"Welcome, contestants, to this year's Crimson Warrior Rite."

A ripple of excitement passed through the crowd.

"As you all know," she continued smoothly, "there are rules to be followed. You will be informed of every rule in detail later. However, there is one rule that I must emphasize now, as it is the most important one." Her gaze sharpened slightly. "If any of you injure or kill another participant outside of an official fight, you will be immediately disqualified, and fined heavily

She paused, letting the words sink in before adding with a light smile. "I'm sure none of you wish to pay such an unreasonable amount?"

People exchanged glances, some swallowing nervously, others nodding in agreement. No one wanted to test that rule. "Wonderful," the woman said, clearly satisfied "Now, for today's dormitory selection, the game has been decided."

Beside me. Chloe swallowed audibly. "I really hope the game is something simple," she whispered. "So we can at least choose

a decent room"

Miles leaned closer, his tone far more optimistic. "Hopefully," he said, then glanced at me and added confidently, "but we

have him, so it'll be fine

10.24 Mon, reply

Chapter 134

I raised an eyebrow at that, giving him a sideways look.

159

55 vouchers

What was with this kid? He was acting like I was some legendary warrior who could handle anything. I might be capable, but

even I had limits.

The host smiled again, her eyes sweeping over the crowd. "Today's game," she announced, "will be gambling."

For a split second, the entire arena froze.

Chloe stared ahead in disbelief. "G-gambling?" she muttered. "Most people here are of noble blood. Nobles don't gamble. This is going to be difficult."

"It won't be difficult for everyone," Miles said casually.

Chloe turned to him sharply. "What?"

Miles lifted his hand and pointed straight at me.

I didn't say anything, but a slow, sly smirk spread across my face. There were many things in this world that I might not excel at, but gambling wasn't one of them. Fate, luck, tricks, reading people, none of it had ever worked against me.

Even the heavens themselves had failed to win.

I smiled to myself.

It seemed a comfortable room was already waiting for me.

宙

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 135

[1,693 words]

Chapter 135

Selene

E

59

55 vouchers

I dragged my tongue slowly across my lips, savoring the moment, before licking them properly, my eyes practically sparkling as I stared at the growing pile of gold coins stacked neatly in front of me. Forty... fifty... maybe more? I honestly had no idea anymore. The only thing I knew for certain was that they kept coming, one defeated gambler after another feeding my table with their losses.

At the beginning, when the gambling started, people looked at me with amusement. To them, I was small, young, unimposing, and easy prey. Someone they could bleed dry without effort. None of them expected me to win even once. What they didn't know was that they were gambling against someone who had once gambled and won entire armies in her past lives.

Back then, my warriors had been a strange bunch. They challenged me with everything, strategy, endurance, wit, luck, and gambling had always been one of their favorites. Across the world, gambling was considered a crude, vulgar activity, something beneath nobles, something disgraceful. But I had never cared, not even when I was a Luna. If anything, it turned out I was naturally good at it.

Who was I kidding?

I wasn't just good. I was excellent.

I had never lost.

So if these people truly believed they were playing against someone naive, and inexperienced, then they were catastrophically wrong.

I lifted my gaze to the man sitting across from me and smiled.

“I won again.”

He stared down at the cards on the table, his brows knitting together as realization finally sank in. “Fuck,” he muttered under his breath before glaring at me with frustration. He shoved his chair back, clearly intending to stand up and leave.

“Wait,” I said lightly.

He froze mid-motion and looked back at me.

I pointed calmly at the small handwritten sign I had placed on the table earlier.

(If you want to play with me, put two gold coins down. I will put two down too.)

His jaw tightened. He clearly wanted to argue, and protest, but I only smiled sweetly at him, tilting my head as I met his gaze without blinking.

He cursed again, louder this time, before angrily tossing the coins to the table and storming off.

I watched him leave, then chuckled softly to myself as I looked down at the ridiculous pile of money that had accumulated. Technically, there was no rule today stating that losers had to leave two extra gold coins behind. But I was Selene Bloodrose. Opportunity was something I never wasted.

I had simply written the rule myself and placed it where everyone could see.

Anyone who read it, smirked confidently, and still agreed to play, thinking they would easily win my money, deserved what

came after.

I really did love it when people underestimated me. Their expressions afterward were always priceless.

10:24 Mon, Feb 9

Chapter 135

R

B 55 vouch

I smiled fondly and brushed my fingers over the gold coins. “My babies,” I murmured.

Two tables away sat Chloe and Miles. They both looked at me, then slowly looked at each other, clearly unsure what to sa

“You’re really good at everything, Noah,” Chloe said finally, her voice filled with disbelief.

Miles grinned widely. “Tell me about it.”

I glanced over at their tables. Chloe had five red stones, while Miles had nearly thirty. That caught my attention. Red stor weren’t easy to keep, each contestant started with a limited amount, and every loss meant handing one over.

I looked at the boy again, this time genuinely impressed. Then I glanced down at my own red stones, ones I had barely p attention to because I’d been too focused on the money.

Oh. I had quite a lot.

Interesting.

When I lifted my head again, I noticed the host watching me from across the room, her smile sharp and knowing, as if sh found my little performance highly entertaining. Around us, more and more people were openly staring.

I ignored them all.

Leaning back slightly, I glanced around and said casually, “So... who wants to go next?”

Immediately, heads turned away. People suddenly found the floor, the ceiling, and literally anything else far more interesting than my table. I stared at them for a moment, then shrugged. Fine by me. I had more than enough coins and stones anyway. I was satisfied.

Just as I was about to gather my winnings, someone pulled out the chair across from me and sat down.

“Let’s play.” The voice was deep, and unhurried.

I looked up, and froze.

It was him. The prince. The same man who had dismissed the earlier chaos as a nuisance.

I studied him carefully, my gaze sharp and alert. Ever since I’d learned who he was, and what he might be. I hadn’t quite known what to think of him. He was strange. But a game was a game.

I leaned back slightly, meeting his gaze without flinching. "Sure," I said evenly. "Do you have your coins and red stones ready?"

"Red stone?" he repeated lazily, as if the words barely interested him.

The woman who had been silently following him around immediately looked toward the host. The host nodded without hesitation and quickly handed her a red stone. The woman then turned back to me, showed me the stone briefly, and placed it on the table before calmly pulling out two gold coins as well

I watched the exchange carefully, my gaze returning to the princy. He didn't even have a red stone before this. So, was I really the first person he decided to play with!

The thought flickered through my mind, but I didn't dwell on it. Instead, I nodded, reached for the cards, and began dealing I shuffled honestly, without tricks or sleight of hand, and then handed him his cards before taking my own. Ever since the gambling began, I hadn't once used my mind-reading ability. I might be shameless, but I wasn't that shameless. Winning fairly was far more satisfying

I lifted my eyes to him. "Play"

10:24 Mon, Feb 9

Chapter 135

R

He didn't even glance at the cards in his hand.

"Fold," he said casually, placing them face-up on the table.

I froze.

59

55 vouchers

Even with all my confidence, even with my long history of gambling victories, I wasn't prepared for that. My eyes dropped to the cards he had just revealed, and widened in pure shock.

Impossible.

This man-

"Oh my goddess," someone whispered nearby.

“All spades. What the hell?”

The table erupted into murmurs, disbelief rippling through the surrounding contestants. I stared at the cards again, then back at him, my mind racing. How could someone be that lucky? He hadn't even checked. He had known, somehow, that he would win.

I would have suspected cheating, if not for one simple fact that I had dealt the cards myself. And I would have known if anything was wrong.

The prince stood up as if nothing of importance had happened, as if I, and the entire table, were no more than background noise, and turned to leave.

“Huh?” slipped out of my mouth before I could stop it.

The woman behind him turned to follow, but this time I spoke more clearly. “Waits

She paused and looked back at me. I picked up two gold coins and one red stone, pushing them toward her without hesitation. “I lost.”

The woman studied me for a brief moment, then nodded once and took them before walking away after him,

Miles let out a low whistle, “What crazy luck.”

Jexhaled slowly, leaning back in my chair. “Tell me about it.”

The host's voice rang out again. “Was that a fun game?”

Everyone turned to look at her

She smiled brightly and continued, “Unfortunately, the time limit has passed and sure everyone has won at least one red stone by now? she paused deliberately before adding. “The number of stones you possess will determine what type of room you receive. The contestant with the highest number of stones will be allowed to choose one of the most luxurious rooms in the arena, while those with the fewest will be assigned less comfortable accommodations.”

A few groans echoed through the hall

“Oh, and one more thing she added. “Everyone will be paired with a roommate. However, the person with the highest number of red stones may choose to stay alone if they wish

Her gaze slid toward me. curious. “And how many stones do you have?”

“seventy” I replied calmly

People looked at me in awe. The host's smile widened, clearly pleased "Very well. Someone will escort you to your room

10:24 Mon, Feb 9 B

Chapter 135

shortly. Please rest well tonight, tomorrow is when the real trials begin."

55 vo

I nodded, stood up, and stretched my arms slightly, feeling the weight of the long, exhausting day settle into my bone as I was about to leave, I paused and turned around. Chloe was still standing there, shifting awkwardly from foot to foot, gaze fixed on the ground.

"What are you doing just standing there?" I asked. "Come on. Let's go."

She blinked, startled. "M-me?"

I nodded. "Who else? I'm your bodyguard, aren't I?" I paused, then added casually, "Unless you're uncomfortable staying with a guy.

I remembered that I was still disguised as one.

Her face flushed immediately, a deep red spreading across her cheeks. "N-no, it's not that. Most people just like to be alone."

"I like being alone too," I said with a shrug. "but it'll be good to have you around."

She stared at me for a long moment, one hand lifting to rest lightly against her chest, before she looked away shyly and nodded. "T-thank you, Noah. You're really kind to me."

I waved her words off dismissively and turned to walk. If I left her alone in a place like this, she'd be eaten ...

AD

10:24 Mon, Feb 9

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 136

[1,606 words]

Chapter 136

Damien

R

5

E55 vouchers

Soft body. Fierce, sharp eyes that cut straight through me. Hair as smooth as silk sliding between my fingers. A body so perfect it felt like it had been carved for me alone.

I remembered everything.

I remembered my hand gripping her legs, spreading her wider, holding her open while I drove into her like a man who has already lost his mind. I remembered the breathless sounds she made, little noises that told me she wanted more. The way her eyes locked onto mine, dark with lust, daring me to ruin her.

I remembered devouring every inch of her, tasting her like she was a sin I would gladly burn for. I remembered how she clenched around me, tight and desperate, like her body was trying to pull me in, and trap me there. I remembered how addictive she was on my tongue, how once was never enough.

Fuck.

My mind refused to let that day go. It haunted me. When I lay in bed, sleep was impossible because all I could think about was touching her again, feeling her beneath me, breaking her apart slowly. When I ate, my thoughts twisted into filthy fantasies of her on the table, spread open, trembling while I took my time with her. No matter what I did, it all led back to

her.

“Alpha Damien.”

The voice snapped me out of my thoughts. I paused and turned my head slightly, my expression indifferent as I looked to my side. Jason was standing there, staring at me with confusion written all over his face.

Is everything okay, Alpha?” he asked carefully, “You looked... distracted. Did I say something wrong?”

At the table, Yara and Kaius were also watching me, their gazes curious and wary. This was, after all, the first time I had lost focus during a meeting.

I ran a hand through my hair and let out a quiet breath.

What has that woman done to me?

We had only met a few times, and yet somehow she had slipped into my thoughts so deeply that it had become difficult to push her away. Worse still, any lady remembered her far too vividly. The warmth of her skin, the way she looked at me with the sharp, calculating eyes, every memory seemed intent on dragging me back then.

I wanted to see her again, Buri didu's

Then my wait was already starting to feel long, even with all my self-control, low he would probably do it for me in a heartbeat. And she was going to an open apartment Hermina of taking a mate.

Paul she said like the anties

Mare women ride fast and some shaming disastoma, 4 con i tempen, if guning protest and podostam fucker mess distant. It was about a design when me why bad surau along the best amb

I leaned back now, Beam sig mo kad skakel

subi, khaigh teen sex perhaps it el pale, and insing werk

To use everyday us that say

Coriess, reariess, or simply someone who didn't care about who I was.

“Have you found the information I asked for?” I said at last, my voice steady.

Jason blinked, then scratched the back of his head. “Information... Oh, yes, Alpha. I did. About Lady Selene.”

“Speak.”

He straightened slightly. “The Mooncrest Pack has a temple dedicated to the Moon Goddess. It’s not just a place of worship, it’s more like a governing household that serves the temple. In Mooncrest, the temple is the second most powerful authority after the royal family.”

My fingers tapped lightly against the table.

If the temple held that much influence, why would the alpha allow it to exist at all? Most alphas would never tolerate anything that could threaten their rule.

As if she had read my thoughts, Yara spoke up. “From what I saw while I was there, the temple is deeply beloved by the people. They believe its members are the direct descendants of the Moon Goddess herself.”

At the words direct descendants, my fingers stilled against the wood, but only for a fraction of a second.

Yara continued, unaware of the shift. “Even the Alpha believes it. And even if he wanted to dismantle the temple, the people would riot. The royal family and the temple are carefully balanced, they both know their roles, so there’s no open conflict. Jason nodded slowly, his expression serious as he continued, clearly aware that every word he spoke carried

“Yes,” he said. “They are very structured. The head of the temple is always a woman, the woman with white hair. They call her the Moonborn. The Moonborn holds immense spiritual power, power directly tied to the Moon Goddess herself. And, the one who sealed the phoenix a thousand years ago was a descendant of Lady Selene.”

For the first time since the meeting began, I was genuinely surprised. Not because a Moonborn descendant had managed to seal a phoenix, power like that did not come easily, but it was believable. No, what surprised me was that the phoenix had willingly stayed by her side even after knowing that.

Knowing what I knew of that god, knowing his temperament, his pride, and his violent disdain for being controlled, he should have slaughtered her the moment he sensed her bloodline. Any other being would have done exactly that after being sealed away for a thousand years. Yet instead, he stayed.

A faint curl tugged at my lips before I even realized it.

How cunning was that woman, truly, to bend even a mad phoenix to her sale?

The room fell into silence

Who: 1 libed my peer. I found jaaun Yara and Kalustest they had just witnessed sunethog umumural. Kanis de partistai busked gemmonly aiakon He suddrasly slegged back the face the sharp sound es hoing right the

“Fuck” be munud oma me dreaming Army and

1 Bar glaner

jesso caughed awkwustly clearly

saying the Musekeep in always

weaned with the ingles report me suprantaminen pas birth is in Laily Wed and by mistry Plus has shaping brus

“For the past shinasai prars amendem hun pul viss lang ba b c daboo they could be any but bely * sig gard with whose base mode

10:24 Mon, Feb 9

Chapter 136

(59

55 vouche:

“Lady Selene has both white and black hair,” Kaius finished, his tone more thoughtful now.

Jason nodded. “Exactly. Because of that, people saw her as a curse. Her sister was immediately acknowledged as the Moonborn. But when they turned eighteen, it was revealed that Lady Selene was the true Moonborn.”

I leaned back slightly, listening without interruption.

“Even after that,” Jason added, “many people refused to accept it.”

He hesitated, then spoke again, his voice lower. “She was bullied back in her pack.”

Yara straightened instantly. “Bullied?” she repeated sharply. “Her?”

Even I lifted my head at that.

Kaius scoffed and waved his hand dismissively. “I doubt that. She looks like the type who would bully others instead, Are you sure it wasn’t the other way around?”

For once, I found myself agreeing with Kaius. The woman I had met, sharp-tongued, fearless, dangerous in ways most people couldn't even comprehend, did not fit the image Jason was describing.

Jason shook his head firmly. "She was bullied. I heard she was very different back then. Before, she was begging for scraps of attention from her family and her mate."

The word mate froze the air.

The temperature in the room dropped sharply as my eyes darkened, my expression turning unreadable. I could feel Thane stir restlessly beneath my skin, a low, dangerous growl echoing in my mind.

Yara glanced at me before speaking carefully. "She... has a mate?"

Jason swallowed hard before nodding, clearly uneasy as he continued.

"Y-yes," he said. "Her mate is the prince of the Mooncrest Pack. From what I heard, she was deeply obsessed with him. She would do anything for his love and attention."

Jason glanced at me and quickly added, "B-but she's different now. Everyone says she changed after she almost drowned. It was like she became another person entirely. She stopped paying attention to everyone, and she rejected her mate

Kaur's brow shot up "She rejected him?" he blurted out. "Why would she reject a prince? I thought everyone wanted to mate with royalty"

Jason shrugged helplessly "I don't know. But she did reject him. And he didn't accept it. From what I've gathered, he's

eased with her?

My fingers curled shely again the armored

"I'm just kuu Mais proger bare groen werde Nating of the Bussolant Fuck, but trance. He old her 40 deuce ran through to easily araba y me at when the pens ut might have a crush on her

Valy led shely bus per fucking hard my woon ide v populut with bush men and we can't hiace them. If thear a brutal pagi w wold *****ward to cha

1 dun

I leaned forward instead my class ring on any kiwa any experilous dark and uncountable.

Men Wear Neux of the west cases

10:24 Mon, Feb 9

Chapter 136

R

59

B 55 voucher

They were obstacles.

If they knew their place, I would not interfere. But if they continued to circle her like vultures, mistaking her freedom for availability, then...

For the first time in a thousand years, I would not hesitate to start a war, just to remind the world exactly where they stood.

B

AD

Comment

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 137

[1,483 words]

Chapter 137

Selene

“Noah.”

55 vouche

A soft voice called out. Before the person could even finish the motion of touching me, my body reacted on instinct alone. woke up violently, my hand shooting out to grab their wrist, twisting and dragging them forward.

In one smooth movement, I rolled us onto the bed, my weight pinning them down as my other hand reached beneath the pillow, fingers closing around the small dagger I always kept there. I straddled the person, pressing the cold edge of the blade against their throat.

My vision was still blurred from sleep, darkness clouding my eyes, my mind half trapped between dreams and reality, but my voice came out sharp and lethal.

“Who sent you?” I growled, the sound low and dangerous.

The person beneath me didn’t answer.

My frown deepened as I forced myself to wake fully, tightening my grip just enough to make my point clear. “Tell me.” I sa coldly, “your answer will decide whether you die or not.”

“N-noah...”

The same soft voice came again, trembling now.

That was when it hit me. The sound snapped me out of the haze completely.

I blinked, once, then again, my breath catching as my eyes finally focused on the person beneath me. Lying on the bed, eye wide with fear, body shaking uncontrollably, was Chloe. Her face was pale, almost colorless, and she looked at me as if she had just stared death in the eyes.

I froze.

Slowly, my gaze dropped from her terrified expression to the dagger in my hand, still pressed far too close to her throat. My breath left me in a quiet curse as I immediately pulled the weapon away, tossing it aside like it had burned me

I ran a hand through my hair and leaned back, exhaling heavily

again I uniced to myself

The war thur bra tume

The last time i hagened a had won Joslyn, and surmaher geting in the crimson pack, and the same thing in Marve

A this jomu à Wandt Ford wudratsing I isavacassidy and i we pray track After insing te natty lives 42 4 warcius. 3

he danger has more been a safe that or kill we are inners dan Essmill Frau Basarku Hatiny pompy in the euph My back levert pun pe lemn pe that He was the wom dangernes skaly is the

bare the anatics auudad the three which, ny buthus munchadly labeled de DEN

as

1 wai thir past is * Bernd kin

#lery di warned call it

10:24 Mon, Feb 9

DR

Chapter 137

59元

E 55 vouchers

She looked up at me, still shaking, and tried to speak. "I-1-"

I sighed and leaned back fully, my shoulders relaxing now. "I'm sorry, Chloe, I thought I was dreaming. I'll be more careful

next time."

I extended my hand toward her.

She hesitated for just a second, glancing from my face to my hand, before slowly placing hers in mine. I pulled her up gently, making sure she was steady before letting go..

"It's my fault." she said quickly, shaking her head. "I shouldn't have sneaked up on you like that. It's just... you didn't wake up for dinner yesterday, or breakfast this morning. I thought you might be hungry."

I glanced toward the window, noticing the bright light spilling into the room. The sky was already fully lit.

It was already morning.

Chloe followed my gaze and smiled softly. "You were probably meditating to become stronger," she said with genuine admiration. "I think that's amazing. You even skipped meals for it."

I scratched the back of my head awkwardly.

How was I supposed to tell her that hadn't been meditating at all? That I had simply been so exhausted that the moment my body touched the bed, I'd passed out without even realizing it? For someone like me, who genuinely loved to sleep, that was more than normal.

If Chloe hadn't woken me up, I probably would have slept straight through half the day.

Instead of correcting her, I just stretched my arms lazily and let the moment pass. My eyes dropped to the small bag she was holding, crinkled and clearly stuffed with something.

"What's that?" I asked.

She looked down at it and blushed slightly. "I brought you bread," she said softly. "Just in case you got hungry. They said we should meet outside soon. The Crimson Warrior Rite is about to start."

3 seemed sleep time was officially over

I nodded and took the bag from her, the faint warmth of her hands lingering for a second longer than necessary, and smiled despite myself as I said. "Thank you. Chloe"

nodded quickly, her face still flushed the redness creeping all the way to the tips of her ears as if she hadn't expected that. She hesitated stubbing her fingers on the table, there

and I was again. Tim. I wanted to go for a drink before the spirit

guy

I was slightly surprised and for a moment Chloe looked up at me. I was surprised too. She had the band that did my ass when I was awake as I did. She placed it in my hand and said softly that

1 Fab an myste and shed my head emmy the big buttered caps before backing buka hec

M's face bud bond betur me hoped to a tige tinged by wed I was drink warmed the might count to the

bkor 53¥etist-5 6! +4%e go l ym €¥A# indi As+++\${f} Aezku¥ {£ +KO€} ¥HEUR¥ { JR EUEF བདེན་གྱི་ལྷོང་ REལྷོ་ཞེ་qicak yཏམ །ཞེ་མར་ལྷོ་

*

der ngluwih Achar de could in anything about

10:25 Mon, Feb 9

Chapter 136

R

“Lady Selene has both white and black hair,” Kaius finished, his tone more thoughtful now.

359

55 vouchers

Jason nodded. “Exactly. Because of that, people saw her as a curse. Her sister was immediately acknowledged as the Moonborn. But when they turned eighteen, it was revealed that Lady Selene was the true Moonborn.”

I leaned back slightly, listening without interruption.

“Even after that,” Jason added, “many people refused to accept it.”

He hesitated, then spoke again, his voice lower. “She was bullied back in her pack.”

Yara straightened instantly. “Bullied?” she repeated sharply. “Her?”

Even I lifted my head at that.

Kaius scoffed and waved his hand dismissively. “I doubt that. She looks like the type who would bully others instead. Are you sure it wasn’t the other way around?”

For once, I found myself agreeing with Kaius. The woman I had met, sharp-tongued, fearless, dangerous in ways most people couldn’t even comprehend, did not fit the image Jason was describing.

Jason shook his head firmly. "She was bullied. I heard she was very different back then. Before, she was begging for scraps of attention from her family and her mate."

The word mate froze the air.

The temperature in the room dropped sharply as my eyes darkened, my expression turning unreadable. I could feel Thane stir restlessly beneath my skin, a low, dangerous growl echoing in my mind.

Yara glanced at me before speaking carefully. "She... has a mate?"

Jason swallowed hard before nodding, clearly uneasy as he continued.

"Y-yes," he said. "Her mate is the prince of the Mooncrest Pack. From what I heard, she was deeply obsessed with him. She would do anything for his love and attention."

Jason glanced at me and quickly added, "B-but she's different now. Everyone says she changed after she almost drowned. Ily was like she became another person entirely. She stopped paying attention to everyone, and she rejected her mate."

Kai's brows shot up "She rejected him?" he blurted out. "Why would she reject a prince! I thought everyone wanted to # with royalty"

fama struggled bripiady 3 don't know. But she did rejezt bi And he didn't accept it. From what I've gathered, he's

Accessed with her

day Singers suried slowly again the arm

**an patum Many jangår han prince piratawad au kwa Nyle Exar the senian Back, her tratance. He asked her sa dance on Bength for early sprite of the night bare truck in her

Vars nodded slowly begeer Beking sumard we won greet with both man and semen, Iran) blaps thom. If ther's leavitha pesan gris is the wah we wish

3 inaned forward waaral ng diem mating na ng kines and rageraden dark week veremaskakekas

Men Make of thento es spango wataka

Chapter 136

They were obstacles.

55 voucher

If they knew their place, I would not interfere. But if they continued to circle her like vultures, mistaking her freedom for availability, then...

For the first time in a thousand years, I would not hesitate to start a war, just to remind the world exactly where they stood.

田

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 138

[1,821 words]

Chapter 138

Selene

“Noah, did you eat the bread I gave-”

3.55%

1. Vouchere

Before Chloe could even finish her sentence, my body reacted on instinct. I bent down in a flash, so fast it probably looked ridiculous to anyone watching, crouching low and covering half my face with my hand as if exposing it for even a second would be a death sentence.

Chloe and Miles froze, staring at me in confusion, then shock, early not understanding my sudden and extreme behavior.

Miles squinted at me like I had completely lost my mind. "Noah what are you doing?"

I didn't answer him. I couldn't. My heart was hammering violently against my ribs, my throat dry as I swallowed hard.

Oh my goddess.

He was really here. That annoying, infuriating, terrifyingly perfect man was here.

My fingers curled slightly against my face as I fought the urge to curse out loud.

Fuck. I knew he was going to be here. Yara warned me. That was the whole reason I had come dressed like this in the first place, hiding behind a male disguise, pretending to be someone else, just so I wouldn't be recognized. Especially not by him.

But the worst part was that Damien had already seen me in this disguise before. Even if I was dressed like a man, my features were still mine. My posture, my eyes, the way I moved. I still looked like the male version of myself. Even a fool would be able to tell.

And Alpha Damien was anything but a fool.

If he so much as glanced in my direction, there was a very real chance he already knew it was me.

Miles stepped closer, lowering his voice. "Noah," he said slowly, "you're acting weird. Are you hiding from someone?"

Chloe placed a gentle hand on my shoulder, her touch hesitant but full of concern. "Are you okay?" she asked softly. "Did you feel any pain? Are you hurt?"

I forced myself to look up at them, just enough to meet their eyes without fully exposing my face. Both of them were staring at me with genuine worry, which only made this harder.

Miles glanced around, then back at me. "You are hiding from someone, aren't you?"

I sighed quietly.

Of course I was hiding from someone. I was hiding from their alpha. From the most powerful man in the world. From the man who could end this entire farce with a single step in my direction.

How was I supposed to explain that?

I couldn't tell them until I got what I wanted.

"Hm," I said vaguely, still half-crouched, shielding my face. "Yes. I'm hiding from someone."

Chloe's brows knitted together. "Who? Is it someone dangerous?"

Dangerous? I almost laughed.

1/4

MEZZ QUE, PED TV

Chapter 18

"Zangers is an understatement." I muttered under my breath

"What Chloe asked, clearly not catching it

*.55%

I looked at her innocent face, at the genuine fear already forming in her eyes, and felt a sharp twinge of guilt I didn't want to be to her. But I had no other choice.

"Yes," I said quietly. "Very dangerous. More dangerous than you could ever imagine. I didn't expect that person to be here... and if he catches me, I'm done for."

Chloe's face drained of color immediately, "g-gods-" she whispered. "Then what are we going to do?"

I scanned the area quickly, my body angled just enough to keep Damien out of my direct line of sight, my hand still partially covering my face. "I need to hide my face properly." I said, thinking fast. "If he doesn't see my face, he won't know it's me."

At least, that was the hope.

I had already taken the herb earlier to mask my scent, so he couldn't track me that way. As long as I kept my face hidden, there was a chance that I could slip past his attention.

Chloe followed my gaze, then suddenly pointed. "Look," she whispered urgently. "That guy has a mask."

Miles and I looked in the direction she indicated. Sure enough, one of the contestants nearby wore a mask that covered most of his face. For a split second, excitement flared in my chest.

That could work, I thought. But the moment the thought crossed my mind, the excitement died, just as quickly as my eyes landed on the person standing beside the masked contestant.

My expression darkened.

It was him.

The same man from yesterday, the one outside the arena. The one whose hand I had stopped when he tried to touch Chloe.

Of all people. I exhaled slowly. Why that dummy?

Judging from how close they were standing, the two men were clearly together. They didn't look like acquaintances or

people who happened to be near each other, but partners. That alone made the situation troublesome. Buying the mask from one of them would immediately involve the other, and from the way that man carried himself, I doubted it would end peacefully.

As if sensing my gaze, the man turned around.

The moment his eyes landed on me, his expression darkened into a frown. There was irritation there, as if the humiliation I had put him through yesterday was still burning in his chest. His jaw tightened, his eyes narrowing, and I could practically feel the resentment rolling off him.

...Great.

"Well," I muttered under my breath, clicking my tongue softly, there goes my chance of getting the mask."

Miles and Chloe both looked at me.

Chloe understood immediately. Her shoulders drooped slightly, and she lowered her features. "I'm sorry, Noah, this is my fault."

I shook my head without hesitation. "It's not,"

she, guilt flashing across her delicate

And it truly wasn't. If I wanted, I could still get the mask. A bit of wit, a bit of money, maybe a threat or two, and it would be

13:22 Tue, Feb 10

Chapter 118

9achers

done. But knowing those men, they wouldn't just ask for coins. They would demand Chloe's sword as well, and that was something I wouldn't agree to. That blade meant far too much to her, and I wasn't about to let those scum lay a finger on it

Before I could think further, Miles suddenly spoke. "I'll be right back."

He didn't wait for an answer. He simply turned around and walked off, disappearing into the crowd.

I barely paid attention to him. My focus had already shifted to amore desperate solution. With a quiet sigh. I reached for my dagger, intending to cut a strip from my shirt to cover my face. The only reason I hadn't done that earlier was because cloth tore too easily during combat, and the last thing I needed was my disguise falling apart in the middle of a fight. But I didn't have the luxury of being picky anymore.

Just as I was about to slice into the fabric, a familiar voice echoed behind me.

"Here you go."

I froze, and turned around slowly. Miles stood there, holding out a black mask. Both Chloe and I stared at him, completely taken aback.

Chloe's eyes widened, her lips parting in disbelief. "H-how...?" she whispered.

Miles shrugged casually. "That's a secret."

I shifted my gaze past him.

The two men who had been standing together earlier were now deliberately looking away, their bodies tense, fear written all over them.

I looked back at Miles.

For the first time, I truly studied him. Until now, I had thought he was just a reckless kid, curious, eager, and far too willing to throw his life into something dangerous. But this wasn't something a normal twelve-year-old could pull off so easily.

Miles wasn't simple.

I didn't question him further. Like I always told myself, other people's secrets weren't my business.

"Thank you. I owe you one," I said sincerely. Then I turned away, stepping slightly out of sight from the crowds and contestants, most of whom were far too focused on the upcoming fights to notice anything else. I hoped that Alpha Damier was just as distracted.

Please, be busy with literally anything else.

I slipped the mask over my face and turned back around. "So, how do I look?"

Chloe swallowed hard, her eyes lingering on me a little longer than necessary. "You look... even more mysterious," she said softly, her cheeks flushing. "And very handsome, Noah."

I blinked.

That wasn't exactly what I was asking, but I supposed it wasn't a bad answer either.

The beautiful host lifted her hand, and just like that, the cheers were cut off. Every contestant's attention snapping back to her as she smiled.

"As you can see," she said, gesturing lazily around the arena, "we have a large number of contestants this year. Because of that, the first battle is designed to eliminate as many people as possible in the shortest amount of time."

Whispers erupted at once with people leaning toward one another.

3/4

1322 Tue, Feb TU

Chapter 138

55%%

fouchers

"This tight," she continued, a slow anile curving her lips, "is called The Last Man Standing. As the name suggests, you will be given one hour. Within that time, you must eliminate as many opponents as possible. Only those still standing at the end will advance to the next stage."

She paused, letting the weight of her words settle, before adding almost casually, “And if not enough of you are eliminated, nobody moves on. The fight will continue until the numbers reach what we require.”

The murmurs grew louder. Some swallowed nervously. Others smiled like predators just granted permission to hunt.

The host raised a finger, and silence fell again. “There are two ways to eliminate someone. You may kill them, or you may force them to surrender.” Her eyes gleamed as she tilted her head “The choice is yours. But keep one thing in mind, killing someone means one less enemy to worry about. After all, you never know when someone who surrendered might leave the arena, nurse their resentment, and come back for revenge.”

A soft, dangerous laugh slipped from her lips. “Accidents happen all the time, after all.”

My lips curled upward beneath the mask.

Ah. I see what you’re doing.

This woman wasn’t just announcing rules, she was stirring the pot, deliberately pushing people toward bloodshed, planting paranoia into their minds and watching it bloom. She had dangled a perfectly crafted temptation in front of hundreds of desperate warriors and dared them to take it.

I didn’t know whether to call her a brilliant host or someone who simply loved chaos far too much.

Either way, she had thrown out the bait.

Now, all that was left was to see how many people were foolish enough to bite.

4/4

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 139

[1,740 words]

Chapter 139

Selene

55%

watichars

For a brief moment, everyone simply stared at one another, their thick with suspicion and bloodlust, as if they were all silently weighing who would strike first and who would hesitate long enough to die for it. Then, almost as if an invisible signal had been given, weapons were drawn all at once, and people charged at each other, each one wanting to be the first to kill rather than the first to fall

One man barely had time to reach for the hilt of his sword before another slashed across him without mercy, steel biting deep into flesh, and the first man crumpled to the ground, life leaving his eyes before he could even comprehend what had happened.

The second man smirked, clearly pleased with himself, already turning to find his next victim, but his triumph lasted only at moment before an arrow whistled through the air and pierced him cleanly, killing him where he stood.

Bodies began to fall one after another, the arena floor quickly stained with blood.

People were dying everywhere, some fighting fiercely, others panicking, some striking first out of fear, and one by one they collapsed, never getting back up.

Beside me, Chloe let out a sharp gasp, her hand flying to her mouth as she stared at the scene with wide, horrified eyes, while I simply crossed my arms and observed everything calmly

“Oh my goddess,” Chloe whispered, her voice trembling. “Why are they killing each other like that? This is... this is terrible.”

I glanced at her briefly, immediately understanding that she hadn't been exposed to much violence before. To her, this must have looked like madness, but to me, it was the most predictable outcome imaginable. The moment the host spoke, I knew this was exactly how it would unfold.

Fear was an excellent weapon, and the arena masters knew how to wield it well. By instilling uncertainty and dread, they pushed people into a corner where the only choices felt like killing or being killed.

No one trusted anyone. No one knew what the person beside them was thinking. And so, rather than risk hesitation, they chose to strike first.

It was simple. Brutal, but simple.

Despite that, I couldn't deny that some of the contestants were impressive. A few moved with terrifying precision, killing others with nothing more than a flick of the wrist or a single decisive strike.

Watching them stirred something restless in me. When the time came, I wouldn't mind testing myself against opponents

like that.

Miles, standing on my other side, glanced at my unbothered expression and raised an eyebrow.

"Shouldn't we also fight?" he asked cautiously. "You're way too calm. What if someone comes after us?"

I looked at him, genuinely confused by the question. "Why would we fight?"

"What?" he blurted, clearly caught off guard.

Before he could ask anything else, I stepped forward, ignoring the chaos around us, and bent down to pick up a small stick lying on the ground. Slowly, I drew a wide circle on the arena floor in front of us, my focus narrowing until everything else faded into the background. I could feel Chloe's and Miles's confused gazes on my back, but I didn't acknowledge them. Instead, I continued drawing, carving strange symbols and intricate patterns into the dirt.

Gradually, the fighting around us slowed. One by one, people noticed what I was doing. They stopped killing each other and soon enough, every pair of eyes was fixed on me.

1/4

13:23 Tue. Feb 100 67

Chapter 139

.55%

When I finally finished. I leaned back to admire my work, a small, satisfied smile tugging at my lips. I lowered myself to the ground, resting against a nearby pillar, wiped the sweat from my forehead, and let out a quiet breath.

“Finally,” said lazily. “Done.”

Miles and Chloe exchanged a quick, uncertain glance, their eyes moving from each other to the strange markings carved into the ground and then back to me, clearly trying to make sense of what I had just done.

Miles was the first to speak, his brows knitting together. “What are you doing?”

I didn’t bother looking up at him immediately. Instead, I studied the circle one last time, making sure every line was complete, before answering calmly, “I’m building a safe zone.”

“Safe zone?”

I glanced at Chloe, meeting her eyes, “Don’t leave the circle if you want to stay safe.” My gaze shifted to Miles, and I added, with a small shrug, “You, however, can do whatever you want.”

Miles opened his mouth, clearly ready to say something, but before he could get a single word out, Chloe nodded without hesitation and quietly sat down beside me inside the circle, her trust so immediate that it almost startled me. She didn’t question it, or doubt me for even a second.

Miles stared at her in disbelief, then let out a long sigh and shook his head. “I don’t know if I should call you crazy,” he muttered to Chloe, “or just unbelievably trusting.”

He paused, glanced at me again, then huffed softly. “But then again... I kind of get why you trust him so much.” With that, he sat down inside the circle as well, folding his legs and muttering under his breath, “I just hope we don’t die too early. That would be a real shame, honestly.”

I looked at the two of them quietly, a faint sense of amusement flickering through me. I genuinely didn’t understand why they trusted me so easily, especially in a place like this, but I wasn’t foolish enough to reject trust when it was given freely. Trust, after all, was a rare, and useful thing.

“What a joke.”

The mocking voice cut through the air sharply, dripping with disdain. "This is exactly why weak people die so early. How can they sit around enjoying themselves when death is right in front of them?"

Laughter followed, echoing across the arena as others eagerly joined in.

"Exactly," another voice chimed in. "They're calm because they know they can't win if they fight. Why even join the competition if you're that weak and scared? It's pathetic."

More people nodded and laughed, their words filled with superiority, as if mocking the helpless was entertainment in i

I ignored them completely.

Their words meant nothing to me. I had long since stopped caring about the opinions of people. When I glanced sideways noticed that neither Miles nor Chloe reacted either. They didn't inch, or spare the voices a glance.

That, apparently, was what truly angered them.

The first man scowled, his irritation growing when he realized he was being and chaos, began to shout eagerly.

"Kill them!" "We don't want weak people in the arena!" "Get rid of them!"

1. The crowd, already drunk on blood

The man grinned, clearly enjoying the attention. He twisted the grip of his sword and said loudly, "You want me to kill them?" His eyes gleamed as he stepped closer. "Then I'll gladly kill all of them."

2/4

1323 Tue Feb 10 057

Chapter 139

He charged at us, lifting his sword high above his head

10 vouchers

"Ahhh!" he roared, swinging the blade down with full force, fully expecting blood and screams. Instead, the moment his sword crossed into the circle, a violent force erupted outward.

He was flung back as if struck by an invisible wall, his body flying through the air before slamming violently into the arena wall. The impact was so brutal that the stone cracked and shattered, debris raining down as his body collapsed in a broken heap

The arena fell dead silent.

Gasps rippled through the space around us, and people instinctively staggered backward as if the markings on the ground might leap up and bite them. Even Chloe flinched beside me, her fingers curling into her sleeves, while Miles stared at the circle with his mouth slightly open, his earlier suspension replaced with excitement.

“N-Noah..” Chloe whispered as she looked from the glowing symbols to my face. “W-what just happened?”

I tilted my head slightly, my lips curling into a faint smile.

“What do you mean, what just happened?” I replied calmly. “An arrogant person stepped where they shouldn’t have, and they got exactly what they deserved.”

Chloe blinked, clearly not following. “What...?”

By now, I could feel it, dozens, no, hundreds of gazes locked onto me. On a normal day, I wouldn’t have cared in the slightest; attention had never bothered me. But this wasn’t a normal day, and this wasn’t just any crowd. Somewhere among them was that dangerous alpha, and I knew, without needing to see him, that his eyes were on me.

The unsettling part wasn’t the attention itself, but the uncertainty. I didn’t know if he recognized me, if he knew who I truly was beneath this disguise. If he did, I doubted he would have allowed me to remain here for even this long. And yet, Alpha Damien was unpredictable. No one ever truly knew what was going on in his mind.

A sharp voice suddenly cut through the tension, snapping me out of my thoughts.

“You!” a man shouted, pointing straight at me. “What did you just do? What kind of magic was that?”

“Magic isn’t allowed!” another voice added. “Didn’t you read the rules?”

I turned my gaze toward them slowly, my expression unreadable. “I did, and what I used wasn’t magic.”

“You’ve got to be kidding,” another contestant scoffed, stepping forward. “Anyone with eyes could see that it was magic.”

“No,” I replied calmly. “It wasn’t. It was a simple protective spell.”

The words sparked another wave of disbelief. People glanced at one another.

“Protective?” someone echoed. “There’s no way a simple protective spell could do something like that. You’re lying.”

They weren’t wrong. A normal protective spell shouldn’t have been able to react so violently, let alone incapacitate someone that thoroughly. But then again, I wasn’t normal either.

I was moonborn, the direct descendant of the Moon Goddess herself.

Of course my spells weren’t ordinary. Even something as basic as protection would carry power far beyond what these people considered possible. Compared to them, I was operating on an entirely different level, and they didn’t even realize it

yet.

3/4

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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

Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 140

[1,610 words]

11:26 Wed, Feb 11 BB

Chapter 140

Chapter 140

Selene

Spiritual energy were what these people called magic.

4.20%2

55 vouchers

Spiritual energy came from two sources, the Moon Goddess herself, or one's own relentless effort. The Moon Goddess blessed some people at birth, gifting them with spiritual energy that varied. Some were born with abundant energy, others with barely a trace, and many with none at all. Even among those blessed, there were clear stages, and power that separated the truly gifted from the merely fortunate.

Those who were not blessed were not entirely helpless. They could train, cultivate their bodies and minds, and attempt to awaken spiritual energy on their own. Years of meditation, and ear-death battles could sometimes give rise to it. Sometimes, no matter how hard some people tried, they would ever possess spiritual energy.

Essence was the foundation of it all, and not everyone was born with essence capable of holding that power.

From as far back as history went, moonborn were different.

Moonborn always possessed immense amounts of spiritual energy. Their power was so terrifying that a single moonborn, if they wished, could wipe an entire pack off the map without breaking a sweat. That was exactly what my ancestor had done, the moonborn who faced the phoenix.

The phoenix could not be killed, but it had been trapped, and sealed away using nothing but spiritual energy so powerful that even an immortal creature could not escape it.

Among all the moonborn who had ever existed, I carried the largest amount of spiritual energy.

Where others ran, I only needed to walk. Where others trained endlessly to gain more, I didn't need to try at all. I overflowed with spiritual energy.

In my past lives, I remembered hiding it.

Sienna had convinced me to. She manipulated me into believing that concealing my strength would keep me safe. And later, when hiding it was no longer enough for her, she had gone further, slipping something into my drink, severing my connection to my spiritual energy entirely.

In this lifetime, I didn't care. I would not hide what the Moon Goddess had blessed me with, and I would never allow anyone to take it from me again.

"Disqualify them!" someone suddenly shouted, pointing at me with a shaking hand.
"They broke the rules!"

Murmurs erupted instantly at his words.

The host turned toward me, studying me quietly for a long moment, before a slow smile spread across her face.

“You are wrong,” she said. “They did not use any magic.”

The arena went silent.

“What?” someone whispered.

The host lifted her hand and pointed at the markings on the grand “Look at the spell. It’s a protective spell.”

People leaned forward, squinting, examining the circle more closely. Recognition dawned on them, followed by disbelief.

“gods...” someone gasped. “It really is.”

1/4

11:26 Wed, Feb 11 BBQ

Chapter 140

“But how?” another voice said. “How can a protective spell be this strong? That man few away in an instant?”

20%

I understood why they were shocked. Spells were different from magic. You didn’t even need spiritual energy to cast spells. Anyone could learn them, in theory. You only needed the knowledge. But spells were notoriously difficult, requiring perfect control. For most people, mastering even a single spell took years. But for me? Spells were child’s play.

I had lived ten lifetimes. I had died ten times. Compared to that learning spells was nothing. And combined with my bloodline, even the simplest spell I cast would be stronger than what any ordinary person could produce.

Before the murmurs could settle, a sudden movement caught my attention. A woman who had been staring at me with narrowed eyes raised her bow without warning and released an arrow towards Chloe.

Chloe gasped and squeezed her eyes shut. But the arrow never touched her.

The moment it entered the circle, it was repelled violently, ricocheting back toward the crowd. The woman barely managed to dodge in time, but the arrow struck another man's leg instead.

"Ah!" he screamed, collapsing to the ground in pain.

The arena froze.

Slowly, everyone turned to look at me, fear written plainly across their faces, as if I had personally fired the arrow myself.

I raised an eyebrow, genuinely puzzled.

Why were they looking at me like that?

Miles stared at me as if he was seeing me for the first time, his expression shifting slowly from shock into something deeper. until it finally turned respect. His eyes lingered on the circle I had drawn, then flicked back to my face.

The protective spell..." he said slowly, "it can transfer the other person's attack too?"

I nodded.

"Oh my goddess," he breathed, running a hand through his hair Do you know how hard that is? Even exceptional spell users can't do that. Most can barely maintain a stable barrier, let alone redirect force with that level of precision

Before he could say anything else, one of the contestants stormed forward, clearly agitated, his voice sharp as he pointed first at me and then toward the host.

"This isn't fair," he snapped. "Why is he sitting there while the rest of us are fighting? You said we have to eliminate people within an hour to move on to the next part. They haven't eliminated anyone, so they shouldn't advance"

I turned my head toward him slowly, a small smile forming on my lips. "I think you misunderstood something,"

He frowned "What?"

"The host never said everyone has to eliminate someone," I replied. "She said we all have to eliminate people. There's a difference. As long as people are being eliminated within the tin limit, the condition is fulfilled. Whether I personally swing a blade or not is irrelevant."

A bush fell over the arena as all eyes shifted toward the host.

She met their gazes with an innocent, and pleasant smile, offering no correction, or denial.

That silence was her answer.

Murmurs broke out immediately, frustration rippling through the remaining contestants as they exchanged looks, realizing too late that they had walked straight into a loophole

2/4

11:26 Wed, Feb 11

Chapter 140

20%

55 vouchers

Beside me. Miles let out a short laugh and shook his head slowly “I really thought I had met shameless people before, but you? You’re on an entirely different level.”

I glanced at him, genuinely unsure whether I should take that as praise or insult.

Chloe hesitated, worry flashing across her face as she leaned closer to me. “But... are you sure you should have told them?” she asked quietly. “What if some of them won’t fight?”

“They’ll fight.”

She blinked. “How do you know?”

“Because.” I said simply, my gaze drifting back to the restless crowd, “at the end of the day, they all want to move on to the next match. And to do that, they have no choice. Besides, warriors don’t run. To them, running away is the same as dying. So they’ll do what they always do, kill each other.”

Miles and Chloe exchanged a glance, both clearly unsettled by how casually I said it.

I tilted my head slightly, studying their expressions. “Or, would you prefer to throw your lives away instead?”

Neither of them answered.

“You know, dying is incredibly easy, and it hurts a lot. If you don’t want to die, you survive. Even if that means cheating. Even if that means being shameless. Survival comes first.”

Miles looked at me carefully. "You sound like someone who's died before."

I didn't respond.

I simply turned my attention back to the arena, watching as the tension finally snapped as contestants lunged at one another just as I had predicted. Honestly, most of them posed a real threat. If it came down to it, both Miles and Chloe would survive even if they fought, but they didn't need to.

And if fighting wasn't necessary, then it was nothing more than a waste of time.

I glanced to the side, and saw the prince, leaning lazily against the stone wall at the far edge of the arena, his posture relaxed to the point of indifference. No one had approached him. Not a single contestant had even dared to drift too close to where he stood. It wasn't because he had cast a protective spell, it was simply because no one wanted to test what would happen if they went close to him. Fear alone was enough to keep them away.

The prince wasn't watching the fight at all. While everyone else was focused on survival, his attention had been fixed on something else entirely. Curious despite myself, I followed the direction of his gaze, and the moment I did, my body stiffened as if ice had crept into my veins.

Alpha Damien.

Of course. I should have known.

My breath caught slightly as I stared at him, only to realize that his eyes were still on me, as though he hadn't looked away even once since the chaos began.

I frowned, my thoughts spiraling faster than I wanted them to. Why was he staring like that? Did he already know? Did he somehow recognize me despite everything I had done to hide myself?

I shook my head almost immediately, forcing the thought away. No. That was impossible. If he truly knew who I was, I wouldn't still be standing here.

Trying to calm myself, I swallowed and shifted my gaze away from him, turning it back toward the prince instead, only to freeze again.

3/4

AS

Editorial board

Editorial Board: Our editorial team works behind the scenes to refine each chapter, maintain consistency, and deliver the best reading experience.

Share to your friends

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