

# Alpha Damien & His Troublemaker

## Hope Is Not Optional — Manuel Flores 51

[ 1,605 words ]

Chapter 51

Chapter 51

Selene

The courtyard was alive with music. Laughter and chatter spilled through, echoing off the marble walls.

Many noblewomen surrounded my stepmother, each one trying to outshine the other with their fake smiles. My stepmother stood at the center of them all, her chin raised. She basked in their attention, pretending to be humble while clearly enjoying every word of praise.

“Congratulations, Lady Jessica,” someone said, their tone dripping with admiration. “Sienna will have a full white wolf. What a blessing, it’s truly something to celebrate.”

My stepmother chuckled softly, her eyes glinting with pride.

“Thank you,” she said sweetly. “I’m so happy for my stepdaughter. She’s always been so talented and beautiful. I can’t wait to see her white wolf.”

Another woman leaned closer, whispering just loud enough for others to hear. “You’re so kind. I’ve never seen anyone so devoted to their stepchildren. It’s as if you gave birth to Sienna yourself.”

My stepmother placed a hand over her chest and gave a modest laugh. “Sienna has always been a good girl since she was young. Of course, I love her as my own.”

Not far away, my father was deep in conversation with the other noble men. “I can’t wait to see the white wolf,” he said proudly. “I know Sienna will make our family proud.”

Kane, standing with a group of men, wore that usual smug expression of his. “If any of you idiots think you can touch Sienna after she gets her wolf,” he said with a smirk, “I’ll kill you.”

Cross didn’t bother to join in. He simply drank and watched everything with that calm look of his.

From where I stood, I heard everything.

There was no expression on my face. I had learned long ago not to waste them/ Everyone believed Sienna would be the one blessed by the moon goddess.

That was fine. I wanted it that way. I wanted to set the stage perfectly, to make their shock that much sweeter.

I had already finished what needed to be done, but I waited, leaning lazily against the great oak tree at the edge of the forest. My arms were crossed, my eyes half-lidded as the music drifted through the air.

I heard the sound of a branch snapping behind me. I tilted my head slightly, not surprised.

Sienna stumbled out from between the trees. Her elegant dress was torn in several places, streaked with dirt and blood. Thin scratch marks lined her arms and neck, and her perfect white hair, once styled into careful curls, was now a tangled mess of leaves and twigs.

She looked as though she had crawled through hell itself.

The sight made my lips twitch in amusement. It was honestly worth the wait.

I pushed myself away from the tree, and as I did, a branch broke under my heel. The sudden sound made Sienna gasp. She whipped around, her face pale, clutching a long stick like a weapon.

“Who’s there?” she cried out, panic lacing her voice. “Don’t hurt me! I’ll kill you!”

The branch came swinging wildly toward me, but I caught it easily mid-air, my grip firm.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23 MG.

Chapter 51

“Hurt you?” I scoffed, my voice cool. “Now why would I do that?”

Her breath caught. Slowly, her wide eyes lifted to meet mine.

“Selene?” Sienna whispered, her voice trembling. She stared at me, eyes wide and raw. Fear sharpened the edges of her face; for a moment she looked as if she could not believe what was happening.

“Y-you... what colour is your wolf, Selene?” she asked.

I smirked, the smile slow. "Wouldn't you like to know?"

She flinched like I had slapped her. "Impossible..." she muttered, as if saying it would make it less true.

I turned, ready to go. "Let's go. They must all be waiting."

Her fingers closed on my sleeve. The hold was desperate. She shook her head, voice pitched low. "Selene, please-don't."

I crossed my arms and pulled my sleeve free. "Don't what?"

Her cheeks flushed a painful red. She bit her lip, then blurted, "D-don't show them your wolf. If you have the white wolf, please don't let anyone know. Not tonight. Father... they'll be disappointed in me. You know how they are. They'll put everything on me. If I fail them, they'll be furious."

Disgust washed through me. She wanted me to hide what I had been given so she could keep the spotlight, keep her comfortable place.

Mira's voice slid into my head. 'Shameless.'

'Tell me about it.'

'I can get rid of her if you want. I should have my revenge for what she put me through.'

I felt the hungry part of myself lean toward that thought. I shook my head. 'Not yet. A fast death would be mercy. But I promise you this, one day she will pay. You will be the one to take her life?'

Mira did not answer in words, but I felt the agreement between us.

I turned back to Sienna. "So you want me to hide because you're afraid of what Father and everyone else will think? Because you want all their praise and expectations for yourself? Tell me, Sienna, does that request make any sense to you?"

She swallowed, her eyes flicking away before forcing herself to meet mine. "Y-yes. Of course it does. I've always made them proud. I carry their hopes so they don't look at you. You should be thanking me, Selene. You've been free all this time because nobody expected anything from you."

Her voice trembled slightly, but she kept talking. "Everything I've done... I did it for you. If you show them your wolf, you'll lose that freedom. You won't be able to do whatever you want anymore."

I sighed, pressing a hand to my temple. Even talking to Sienna felt like I was slowly losing my brain cells. Every word that came out of her mouth grated on my nerves, yet the more I thought about it, the angrier I became. I was angry at myself because I had fallen for her every single time in my past lives.

It was so obvious. Her sweet smiles, her sisterly concern, her gentle words that were meant to protect me, none of it had been real. All of it had been carefully designed to make me hide my power so that she could shine as the Moonborn.

In my past lives, I had listened to her like a fool.

I had thought Sienna was kind. That she was trying to help me avoid unnecessary attention. So I'd hidden my wolf. Pretended I didn't have one. I had gone before the entire pack and said that I was wolfless.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23 8 MG.

Chapter 51

And then the rumors began.

That I had used dark magic.

That I'd stolen Sienna's wolf.

That I'd hidden mine to avoid suspicion.

It spread like wildfire, and suddenly everyone was whispering that my holy white wolf was tainted, and impure.

And all that time, it had been her plan.

I smiled. "Okay."

She sighed in relief, and said in her mind. "Thank the gods. She's still dumb. I just need to find a way to make her white wolf seem worthless."

My smile grew wider. Oh, Sienna, I thought. You really have no idea who you're playing with this time.

"Thank you, Selene," she said sweetly, reaching to hold my hand. "You know I'm doing this for you, right?"

"Of course," I replied with a perfectly innocent smile.

"Good," she said brightly. "Let's go back and show everyone we're back."

We walked together into the courtyard. The cool air brushed against my skin as everyone turned to look at us, my father, stepmother, and brothers all waiting expectantly.

My stepmother immediately spoke up, her voice breathless with anticipation. "Sienna, how is it? Do you have the white wolf?"

Sienna bit her lip, pretending to be shy. "I"

But before she could finish, a deep voice echoed across the courtyard, one word that froze everyone.

"Mate."

Every head turned.

Prince Adrian was sitting casually in his chair, his green eyes gleaming like polished emeralds. The Alpha's eyes widened. "Mate? Is your mate really one of them?"

My stepmother gasped, her hands flying to her mouth. "Oh my goddess!" she cried, tears of joy already brimming in her eyes. "Finally, Sienna! I knew you were the Prince's mate!"

The courtyard erupted with excitement. Everyone surrounded Sienna, congratulating her. Her eyes were wide with disbelief and joy.

No one noticed Adrian's gaze was fixed entirely on me.

And no one saw how my fists clenched at my sides, my heart pounding painfully. The bond thrummed under my skin, that familiar pull, one that I wanted so badly to ignore,

Normally, Mira would have howled mate by now, her voice echoing through my head. But this time, she was silent.

She had given up on him, and his wolf. Just when everyone's excitement reached its peak, the world seemed to slow.

Adrian moved. In a flash, he stood in front of me. The courtyard went silent, and every whisper died.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23 IMG·

Chapter 51

His scent wrapped around me as he lifted my chin with his fingers, forcing me to meet his gaze. Then, without hesitation, his arm slid around my waist, pulling me close.

“My mate,” he said firmly, his voice low and certain.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23

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 52

[ 1,115 words ]

Chapter 52

Chapter 52

Selene

The courtyard fell into a silence so heavy that even the wind sounded deafening. All eyes were on me, and Adrian.

His words lingered in the air. Faces around us shifted in disbelief, shock, and outrage as the murmur spread through the crowd. But the most revealing was Sienna’s. She looked as though she’d been poisoned, eyes wide, lips parted, all color drained from her face. The flawless composure she always clung to had finally cracked.

Normally, I might have felt a flicker of satisfaction seeing her unravel like that. But right now, all I felt was boredom. I wasn’t here to compete with Sienna over Adrian. She could have him if she wanted. I wasn’t playing that game again.

“Impossible...” my stepmother gasped, clutching her chest.

Sienna’s entire body trembled. Her lips quivered before she finally broke, her voice rising with desperation. “T-that’s not possible!” she cried, eyes shaking her head. “You can’t be her mate! You’re supposed to be mine, Adrian, you’re mine!”

The crowd looked at her in surprise. No one had ever seen the composed, and graceful Sienna lose control like this.

Adrian's cold gaze flicked toward her, his arm still firm around me. "Are you saying I made a mistake?" His deep voice cut through the air, laced with authority that made the ground feel smaller beneath our feet. Even I could feel the weight of it. "Who do you think you are to lay a claim on me?"

The change in Sienna was immediate. Her defiance vanished. She bowed her head so fast. "I-I apologize, Prince Adrian. It was stupid of me to say that. I was just... surprised."

He didn't even acknowledge her apology. His focus returned to me, eyes scanning my face as if he were waiting for something, joy, tears, excitement. Anything to show that I was happy with the news. But I had none of that to give.

Inside, I felt nothing. No excitement, or the fluttering warmth that should come with a mate bond. Just a dull ache buried deep in my chest. He had no idea how many lifetimes I'd already lived with that same gaze on me, how many times I'd believed it meant something.

The Alpha finally broke the silence with a booming laugh. "Well, that's unexpected!" he said, grinning. "Who would've thought? Selene, would be prince Adrian mate. Tell me, child, how do you feel? Are you happy?"

Before I could even answer, someone in the crowd scoffed loudly.

"Is that really a question?" a woman muttered. "Why wouldn't she be happy? Being the Prince's mate has been her dream for years. I bet she's ecstatic inside, she is just pretending to be shy."

Another voice chimed in. "I can't believe it's her. When they said the Prince's mate was a Moonborn, I thought it would be Sienna, not Selene. Why her of all people? Sienna would've made a far better Luna."

I didn't react to their whispers. I turned to Adrian instead, meeting his piercing green eyes. His arm was tight around my waist, holding me as if he owned me. I placed my hand against his chest.

"Let me go," I said quietly.

He didn't move. His arm remained firm, his

gaze unwavering.

"Your Highness," I added, sharper this time, trying to push him away. But his chest was like a wall of solid stone.

For a brief moment, his grip tightened slightly, but enough for me to feel the strength in it. As if the very idea of letting me go didn't sit right with him. His gaze bored into mine, before the corner of his lips curved into something between amusement and curiosity.

## Chapter 52

He leaned in slowly, the heat of his breath brushing against my skin. Most people would have shied away, maybe even flushed under that intensity, but I didn't move. I met his gaze head-on, as if he didn't have the power to shake me anymore.

"You really are a different person, Selene," he said finally, voice low, almost thoughtful.

"Thank you," I replied, tone flat.

"It wasn't a compliment," he muttered, his green eyes glinting.

"I know."

We just stared at each other, locked in tension. His presence was overwhelming, his scent dangerous. He stepped back. Only then did I realize I'd been holding my breath. I exhaled, the air rushing out of me like I'd been drowning. Even though I wanted nothing to do with him, my body betrayed me, my skin still tingled where his fingers had touched.

Damn this mate bond.

I rubbed at my arms, trying to erase his touch, then forced a smile and turned to the Alpha. The smile didn't reach my eyes.

"Alpha," I said loud enough for everyone to hear, "you promised to grant me whatever I wanted after I won the contest with my sister, didn't you?"

The Alpha

brows furrowed. The question caught him and everyone else off guard.

"I did," he said, leaning forward slightly. "But wasn't your wish to be with Adrian?"

A humorless laugh almost escaped my lips. "No, Alpha," I said, shaking my head slowly.

The murmurs started again. Whispers rippled through the courtyard. Only Adrian remained silent, his gaze fixed on me, as if he was trying to read my soul.

The Alpha tilted his head, intrigued. "Is that so? Then what is your wish, Selene?"

Behind him, my step mother hissed under her breath, her voice sharp with warning. “Selene! What do you think you’re doing? You will embarrass our family again. Your father haven’t told you what to say yet!”

I didn’t even spare her a glance. She wasn’t relevant anymore.

“I wonder what she’ll ask for,” someone from the crowd whispered.

“I know, right?” another voice answered. “Prince Adrian is already her mate Maybe she’ll wish for his loyalty, she probably feels insecure about Lady Sienna.”

I smiled at their words and bowed my head slightly toward the Alpha.

“My wish,” I said clearly, “is rejection.”

Silence.

It felt as if the entire courtyard stopped breathing. Even the wind/died down. The Alpha blinked, genuinely unsure if he’d heard me correctly.

“...What?” he managed.

The air shifted instantly. I could feel Adrian’s gaze darken, burning into me like fire. He took a slow step forward, voice low and dangerous. “What did you just say?”

I lifted my head, meeting his eyes. My lips curved into a calm smile that felt almost cruel. “I said,” I repeated. “I want to reject you, Prince Adrian of the Mooncrest Pack.”.

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 53

[ 1,082 words ]

Chapter 53

Chapter 53

Selene

“Did she just ask Prince Adrian to reject her....?”

“Y-yes. She just did. The woman who’s always been obsessed with the prince wants to reject him?”

The whispers echoed, rippling through the courtyard, each word laced with disbelief. I could feel their eyes on me but I kept my chin high, my expression calm and indifferent.

I knew exactly what I was doing.

I had been looking for a way to reject Prince Adrian since the moment I came back to this world. But it wasn’t easy. I couldn’t just reject a prince. The Alpha wouldn’t allow it, and Adrian himself would never accept rejection. He would never allow a woman to reject him. His pride would never let it happen.

And I wasn’t strong enough to defy either of them.

That’s why I had waited for the moment to get my wolf. And the contest with Sienna had been the perfect opportunity. Alpha Rhydian was a man of his word; once he made a promise, he kept it. If I asked for this wish now, in front of everyone, he wouldn’t be able to dismiss it so easily.

So when all eyes turned to me, when the world seemed to go still, I met Adrian’s gaze.

His face had darkened completely, his eyes glowing faintly, his jaw set tight enough to snap. He looked seconds away from losing control, and tearing something apart.

Around us, everyone had different reactions. The Alpha was silent, eyebrows raised in shock. My father’s face was blank. My step mother was smiling. My brothers stared at me like they couldn’t process what they’d heard. And Sienna was practically glowing. Her lips trembled from how hard she tried to hold in her smile, but her eyes screamed victory.

She was really obsessed with Adiran.

“Child... what did you just say? You want to reject Adrian?’ Alpha Rhydian asked

“Yes, Alpha,” I said aloud, meeting his gaze steadily. “I do. I want to reject Prince Adrian.”

The Alpha raised an eyebrow, clearly taken aback. He opened his mouth to speak, but Adrian's voice cut through the silence first.

"You're really bold, Selene."

His tone made the hairs on my arms rise. He took a slow step forward, the sound of his boots echoing against the marble ground. I didn't move back, I stared at him. Before he could take another step, Alpha Rhydian's voice boomed across the courtyard. "Wait, Adrian."

The tension crackled between them like lightning. Adrian's jaw flexed, his entire body rigid. For a man known for his control, he was anything but calm now. His eyes burned into me, and I could feel the storm in him. But he obeyed his father, and stopped.

Alpha Rhydian sighed, leaning back slightly in his chair, his expression unreadable. "I know I promised you anything you wanted, Selene," he said carefully. "But this... is a rather complicated situation. I will need time to think it over."

He paused, eyes flicking briefly toward his son before returning to me. "When I've made my decision, I will call you to the palace."

The courtyard filled with murmurs again, people whispering, exchanging glances.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23

## Chapter 53

I didn't say anything. I didn't argue, or plead, or look away. I simply bowed my head slightly and whispered. "Understood, Alpha."

I already knew what that meant, he wasn't going to let me walk away so easily. But that didn't matter. Because I wasn't giving

Even if I had to tear the bond apart with my bare hands. Even if I had to make the whole world my enemy, I would reject him.

"This is a celebration for the White Wolf," Alpha Rhydian said, his gaze sweeping over Sienna and I. "I believe the two of you were able to pass the wolf trial. You both got your wolves, yes?"

Beside me, Sienna flinched. Her lashes fluttered, and then that delicate smile curved her lips, the one she always wore when she was about to lie through her teeth.

"Y-yes, Alpha," she said, bowing slightly. "I got my wolf." She hesitated, glancing at me as if she pitied me. "But Selene didn't. She... she wasn't able to pass the trial."

Her voice dripped with fake concern, but the satisfaction hiding behind it was impossible to miss.

The murmurs started immediately.

“She failed?”

“Wolfless? The Moonborn, wolfless?”

“How embarrassing...”

My father’s gaze hardened, and I didn’t even need to look at him to know what came next.

“You’re completely useless,” he spat, his tone dripping with disgust. “If nobody has any expectations for you, you could have at least gotten a wolf.”

Alpha Rhydian looked at me, disappointment shadowing his expression especially now that I was revealed as his son’s mate.

Adrian looked furious. But whether it was at me or the situation, I couldn’t tell.

“My sister doesn’t have a wolf,” Sienna said, turning toward the Alpha with big, innocent eyes. “Even though I might be blessed by the Moon Goddess, I don’t want to transform in front of her tonight. Can we postpone the ceremony to tomorrow? I just care about my sister’s feelings.”

Murmurs of admiration rippled through the crowd.

“How kind she is...”

“She’s such a good sister...”

“Truly blessed by the Moon Goddess.”

I felt my lips curl up. Alpha Rhydian sighed, nodding. “Fine, I suppose we can postpone it until tomorrow-

“Who said I don’t have a wolf?” My voice sliced through the air, silencing everything.

Sienna froze, her perfect mask cracking for a fraction of a second. I took a slow step forward, my eyes locked on hers.

“Did you hear that from my mouth, Sienna?” I asked calmly.

Her throat bobbed. “W-what are you saying, Selene?”

12.32

Tue, Dec 23

Chapter 53

I tilted my head, letting my smile widen. “I should be asking you that. Why tell everyone I don’t have a wolf? How would you even know that? I never said anything like that to you.”

Her eyes darted, panic flickering behind them. Then, under her breath, so low only I could hear, she hissed, “What are you doing? You promised, Selene.”

“Promise?” I echoed. “Do you honestly believe I’d do something that stupid? Just so you can spread rumors tomorrow that I stole your white wolf with witchcraft?”

12:52 Tue, Dec 23

Chapter 34

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 54

[ 1,421 words ]

Chapter 54

Selene

“Does that mean you have a wolf, Selene?” The alpha asked.

I turned to him and nodded, my expression calm. “Yes, Alpha. I do.”

A flicker of surprise crossed his face, but then he nodded approvingly. “That’s good.” He turned toward Sienna, who stood beside me looking as if the ground had been ripped

from under her. "Since you both have your wolves," Alpha Rhydian said, his gaze shifting between us, "transform. Finalize the celebration."

Sienna stiffened. The color drained from her face. Her lips parted, but no sound came out. Finally, she stammered. "I-I

can't."

The Alpha's eyes narrowed. "You can't?"

"I—" Sienna's voice cracked, her hands trembling as she tried to find the right excuse. "I'm very sick, Alpha. Today has... drained me. I'm not feeling well, so I—"

I tilted my head, watching her performance, and then shrugged lightly, a small, innocent smile curving my lips. "You don't need to stress yourself, Sienna, I'll do mine today. You can do yours tomorrow."

Sienna's eyes widened in panic. "N-no!" She blurted But I didn't pay her any attention. Instead, I closed my eyes and whispered softly. "Mira."

A surge of warmth rippled through my body as the air thickened with white mist. Gasps erupted around me. The mist coiled around my feet like light, glowing brighter and brighter until it enveloped my entire body. And then, bones cracked, muscles shifted, and my vision blurred. The world tilted. I could hear the collective gasp of the crowd as my form shrank and reshaped. The pain was sharp, but familiar. And then it was gone, replaced by strength.

When I opened my eyes again, everything was different.

I wasn't standing anymore, I was on four legs. The cool air brushed against my fur, and the moonlight caught my pure white wolf, making it shimmer like frost. My reflection gleamed faintly in the nearby fountain.

Gasps filled the air.

"Oh my gods..." someone whispered. "Is that..... is that a white wolf?"

"No way, that's the White Wolf!"

"Selene is the one with the white wolf!"

The courtyard froze. Even Adrian's usually composed face cracked in shock, his green eyes widening as he stared at Mira

No one spoke, no one dared to move.

Mira lifted her head high, her gaze sweeping across the crowd. A low, rumbling growl escaped her throat, vibrating through the ground beneath their feet. And then, in a voice that was both divine and commanding, she hissed. "Kneel."

The sound wasn't loud. It didn't need to be. It carried authority, the kind that clawed into your bones and demanded

obedience.

One by one, they dropped to their knees.

My father, my stepmother, my brothers, and Adiran His gaze met mine for one long second before he bowed his head. Even Alpha Rhydian bowed his head.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23 MG.

## Chapter 54

That was the law. The divine decree. The first awakening of the White Wolf wasn't to be challenged or disrespected. No one stood before the chosen child of the Moon Goddess, not even royalty.

Mira prowled forward, the sound of her paws soft against the marble. Her icy gaze landed on Sienna.

Sienna was frozen in place, shaking violently. Mira's growl deepened as she took a step toward her. Sienna stumbled back, heels scraping against the stone.

Another step, and Sienna backed away again until her legs gave out and she fell, gasping.

Mira loomed over her, her blue eyes glowing. "Kneel."

When Sienna didn't move, her stepmother's trembling voice cut through the silence. "Kneel, Sienna!"

Sienna's lips quivered before she finally bowed, pressing her forehead to the ground.

Mira's head tilted slightly, her gaze sweeping across the entire courtyard. Her voice echoed softly in my mind.

'Selene, I won't allow us to be bullied this time. I will make everyone kneel before us.'

My heart swelled. My vision blurred with emotion I couldn't hide. "Thank you, Mira.'

The edges of my vision darkened, exhaustion crashing into me all at once. The power of the transformation was too much. Before everything went black, I caught a final glimpse of them, all kneeling,

\*\*\*\*\*

Adrian

When I looked up, she was already back in her human form.

Selene lay naked on the stone floor, her pale skin glowing beneath the silver light of the moon. Her hair spilled across her face in dark waves, the faint rise and fall of her chest the only sign that she was breathing. She looked calm and peaceful. But the sight made something inside me twist violently.

Everyone was staring at her. Men who should have known better. I could see their shock, desire and it infuriated me.

I felt my jaw tighten as I swept my gaze over them. And just like that, they all turned away, bowing their heads, pretending they hadn't been staring. It didn't matter that nudity was common among us after a shift. It didn't matter that this was nothing new. Because she was mine. And I hated the thought of anyone's eyes on her.

My hand flexed unconsciously, fighting the urge to tear anyone's gaze away permanently. The memory of her words earlier flashed in my mind. "I want to reject you, Prince Adrian of the Mooncrest Pack."

I still didn't understand her.

I didn't know what game she was playing or what the hell she thought she'd gain by rejecting me, but it made me snap, Fury, confusion, possession, all tangled together.

I had never paid any attention to her before today. She was just another face in the pack, a forgettable shadow beside her sister. But now, even the idea of anyone touching her filled me with a rage I couldn't explain.

Her maid rushed forward, panic in her voice. "Quick, Silas! Cover her, and let's take her to the room-"

Her guard knelt beside her, reaching out a hand.

"Don't touch her."

My voice was low, sharp enough to cut through the noise. Both of them froze instantly.

12:52 Tue, Dec 23 MG.

## Chapter 54

I ran a hand through my hair and shrugged off the heavy fur cloak on my shoulders, the fabric brushing against my fingers. Without sparing them a glance, I stepped forward and knelt beside her. Her skin looked cold against the stone. I draped the fur around her shoulders, covering the curve of her back.

She stirred slightly, her lashes fluttering, but didn't wake.

The moment my hand brushed her arm, her scent hit me. My pulse quickened against my will. The bond between us hummed to life again, burning hot under my skin.

I exhaled slowly, trying to steady myself. Damn it. Even this close to her was too much.

I slipped an arm beneath her knees and another under her shoulders, lifting her easily. She was lighter than she looked. My fur slid down slightly, and I adjusted it, keeping her covered as I turned to leave.

"W-wait, Prince Adrian!" Sienna called. She grabbed my wrist. Her grip was desperate. "Please wait. I- I also have the white wolf! Please, let me show you. I'm sure I'm even more powerful than her, Just look at me, Adrian-"

"Touch me again," I said, "and I'll cut off your fingers."

Her breath hitched. The color drained from her face, and she quickly pulled her hand back, shaking.

I didn't even look at her. Turning to my father, I said evenly, "I'll escort her to her room."

Alpha Rhydian's eyes flicked between us before he gave a short nod. "Alright."

I didn't wait for permission beyond that. I carried Selene out of the courtyard, ignoring the whispers, the confusion, and stunned silence. I didn't care about the rest of the celebration.

Her head rested against my chest, her breathing steady, her scent clinging to me. Every step I took felt heavier than the last, the sound of my boots echoing faintly in the corridor.

"Prince Adrian," A voice drawled. "What a surprise. Who would've thought you were her mate?"

I didn't need to look to know who it was. His powerful aura pressed against mine;

I turned slightly, shifting Selene's weight in my arms as my gaze met the figure/leaning casually against the wall.

Alpha Tristain.

His golden eyes gleamed with amusement under the torchlight. And for reasons I couldn't explain, my wolf snarled quietly inside me.

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 55

[ 1,395 words ]

Chapter 55

Selene

Warmth. That was the first thing I felt.

The morning sun brushed against my face. My heartbeat pulsed steadily in my chest, a quiet rhythm that reminded me I was still alive. I blinked slowly, my vision blurring for a second before everything came into focus.

The ceiling above me was familiar. The soft lavender curtains. The scent of wildflowers and parchment in the air.

I was in my room.

I let out a quiet sigh of relief and pushed myself up, my body still heavy, as if the world itself was pressing against my shoulders. My head throbbed lightly, and I lifted a hand to

my temple, trying to piece together the fragments of yesterday. And the memory of last night came back.

No wonder everything felt so disoriented this morning. I had pushed my limits far more than I should have. Reading the fox's mind had already drained me, but shifting into Mira had taken every ounce of strength I had left.

The door creaked open, pulling me out of my thoughts. Evelyn stepped in, balancing a tray in her hands. Steam rose from a bowl, and the scent of herbal soup filled the room. When her eyes met mine, she froze for a second then gasped.

"My lady!"

She hurried to the table, setting the tray down before rushing to my side. Her hands trembled slightly as she leaned close, worry written all over her face.

"Are you okay? How are you feeling? Should I call the physician?"

I couldn't help but smile. For some reason, this scene felt awfully familiar.

I shook my head. "I'm fine, Evelyn. How long have I been unconscious for?"

She pressed her lips together before answering, "A week, my lady. You wouldn't wake up no matter what I did. The physician warned me not to force you awake, or it would only make things worse. So I just had to wait. Thank the Goddess you're finally up. I-I didn't know what I'd do if you didn't wake."

Her voice cracked slightly at the end. The sincerity in her words made me smile.

"I'm sorry for worrying you," I said. "I was just recovering. My body needed time to heal and to remember itself again."

When I thought about her words, I looked at her. "You mentioned the physician," I said. "Did he come to check on me?"

Evelyn nodded quickly. "Yes, my lady. Every day. He came to make sure your body was stable. He said your energy was shifting too fast for a normal wolf, but that it wasn't dangerous."

She paused, her eyes softening into a bright smile. "After you transformed into the white wolf last week, everything changed. Nobody dares to bother me anymore. The ones who used to bully me all avoid me now. They think you'll punish them if they even look at me wrong. They didn't even gossip about you again, afraid you would hear."

A small laugh escaped me. "Is that so?"

“Yes,” she said, nodding eagerly. “Even the Alpha’s personal guards came yesterday to check on your health. They treated you with respect. I still can’t believe that you are the one with the white wolf. I’m so happy, my lady. I couldn’t even sleep.”

I smiled at her, it was nice to see someone was genuinely happy for me without pretending to, waiting for the right moment

to stab me in the back.

12:54 Tue, Dec 23 MG.

## Chapter 55

I reached out to brush a strand of hair behind her ear. “Thank you, Evelyn, for staying by my side.”

She blushed slightly and bowed her head. “Always, my lady.”

‘She’s loyal,’ Mira said. ‘Keep her close. This time, we won’t make the same mistakes.’

I nodded. ‘I will protect her and the people I care about.’

“Oh-before I forget,” Evelyn said suddenly, her voice bright with excitement. She hurried toward the table, where the tray sat, and carefully lifted a small cup. The faint green liquid inside shimmered slightly, steam curling in the air.

She turned and brought it to me, her eyes proud, like she was presenting a treasure. “I made this every day while you were asleep, in case you woke up. It’s the strengthening herb tonic. I brewed it myself. You need to drink it, my lady, it’ll help restore your strength.”

I stared at the drink. That familiar green hue. That sharp, herbal scent. gods, I missed this concoction.

I used to drink this all the time in my past lives until I started doubting Evelyn. Back then, I’d thought maybe she was trying to poison me. So I stopped drinking it. And as a result, I grew weaker. My body couldn’t even sustain my wolf’s strength. Only later did I realize that Evelyn’s mixture wasn’t poison, it was salvation.

I sighed and took the cup, swirling the liquid once before bringing it to my lips “Still green, still dreadful,” I muttered, and then downed it in one go.

The taste hit instantly. It burned my throat all the way down, leaving behind that earthy aftertaste I could never quite get used to.

Evelyn giggled softly. “My lady...”

I set the cup down and waved my hand dismissively. “Don’t get sentimental on me. Tell me what happened last week after I fainted, especially about Sienna.”

Evelyn blinked, her lips twitching like she was holding back something. I caught the faintest hint of a smile forming before she quickly looked down.

“Forgive me, my lady,” she said hurriedly.

I tilted my head, smirking. “Don’t worry. Speak. If you’re smiling, it must be an interesting story.”

Her face flushed red as she nodded. “W-well... actually, after you fainted, Prince Adrian covered your body with his fur cloak and carried you to your room himself.”

I blinked. “...Adrian?”

Evelyn nodded eagerly, the excitement returning to her voice. “Yes! It was so romantic, my lady. All the women in the courtyard were jealous of you. He didn’t let anyone else touch you. He looked like he was worried you might catch a cold.”

I almost choked on my own breath. Romantic? That bastard?

If only Evelyn knew the truth. In every one of my past lives, Adrian wouldn’t have blinked if I were bleeding out in front of him. Now suddenly he cared because I fainted?

I rolled my eyes. “Spare me the unnecessary details, Evelyn. What about Sienna? Did she transform after I passed out?”

Evelyn’s eyes gleamed as she leaned in, her voice dropping to a whisper. “No, my lady. She couldn’t. The Alpha commanded her to shift, but she made excuses, said she was sick, and too weak. Everyone was watching, and when she didn’t shift, the whispers started. Some even said she lied about having a wolf. And when it got too much, she fainted, or pretended to. It was so obvious she was faking it; she couldn’t even keep her eyes fully closed. You should’ve seen it, it was hilarious. Her maid and stepmother were putting on this dramatic show, even though they knew she was pretending.”

## Chapter 55

A slow smile crept across my lips.

“Some things never change, do they?” I murmured, pushing myself up from the bed. My muscles ached, and I stretched lazily, letting out a quiet sigh. “Well, I should get going too.”

Evelyn blinked, confusion flickering across her face. “Get going? Where, my lady?”

“To the main courtyard,” I replied. “There’s a scene that concerns me, and I think it’s about time I made an appearance.”

Her brows knitted slightly. “Yes, my lady,” she said hesitantly, clearly unsure what I meant.

“Oh, and Evelyn,” I added, pausing as I turned toward her. “Prepare two male outfits for me.”

“Two... male outfits?” she echoed, her voice barely above a whisper.

I nodded, a faint smile tugging at the corner of my lips. “Yes. I have something to do outside.” My gaze drifted toward the box hidden beneath my bed. “And I can’t go out wearing the same disguise as before.”

Evelyn’s confusion deepened, but she said nothing, only gave a reluctant nod as I turned away, already planning my next

move.

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

12:54 Tue, Dec 23

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 56

[ 1,614 words ]

Chapter 56

Chapter 56

Selene

I walked with my head held high. Everyone looked at me with confusion and annoyance as I passed, their gazes sharp and full of judgment, but none of them dared to meet my eyes. I didn't bother paying them any attention.

When I reached the main courtyard, several maids were standing at the entrance, Emma, Sienna's maid, and at the front, Hannah, my stepmother's main servant. Hannah stood there with her arms crossed, looking smug, as if she owned the place.

The moment they saw me, they froze. Emma's face went pale, and I could even see her swallow hard. Hannah's expression didn't change, though; she kept that same arrogant frown on her face as she stared at me, looking down as if I were still beneath her.

I walked forward, unbothered by any of them. When I reached the front door and was about to step inside, Hannah suddenly blocked my path.

"Where do you think you're going, Selene?" she said, her tone sharp and mocking. "You can't enter without per-"

Before she could finish, my hand moved on its own. The sharp crack of the slap echoed through the courtyard, her head snapping to the side. She staggered, lost her balance, and crumpled to the ground.

Gasps rippled through the maids. Emma clapped a hand over her mouth, her eyes wide with disbelief, like she couldn't comprehend that someone as meek as me could strike without hesitation.

Poor thing. She was about to learn that a slap was mercy compared to what I was capable of.

Hannah held her cheek, staring up at me with disbelief. "Y-you... how dare you!" she stammered.

My eyes darkened, and I tilted my head slightly. "Do you want another one?" I asked, my voice low and dangerous. "Because I'm more than happy to give it."

She went still immediately, trembling as she lowered her gaze, afraid of what I might do next. Every servant in the courtyard looked at me as if I was a crazy person but it didn't fraze me.

“Learn your place, servant,” I said, voice cold. “Cross that line again and you’ll wish you’d never been born. Belonging to my stepmother doesn’t give you the right to act however you please. Call me by my name again, and that slap won’t be a warning. Keep disrespecting me, and next time nobody will know where your body ends up.”

Hannah visibly shook, terror stripping the color from her face. Emma’s hands twisted the fabric of her dress, fingers white with fear. Normally I’d have ignored them, but I wasn’t in the mood to play the fool today. It was better I taught them this lesson myself, if Mira got involved, the consequences would be far worse.

Hannah didn’t dare say another word. Her lips pressed tight, her gaze dropping to the floor. I could see the humiliation burning in her eyes, the way her pride cracked under pressure. She might be a servant, but she wasn’t just any servant, she oversaw everything in the household after my stepmother. She made the schedules, organized the staff, and whispered in the right ears when she wanted something done. People in the temple respected her more than they respected me.

That was why she had always felt bold enough to bully me, because no one ever stopped her. Because, in her mind, I was the weak daughter, the one without power, the one who would lower her head and take whatever she threw at me. But that Selene was long gone.

If she still thought I would allow myself to be bullied, she must be dreaming.

I turned away from her and walked down the corridor. The sight before me was as extravagant as I remembered. This was where my father and stepmother lived. Where they hosted guests and conducted important meetings like the one happening today.

## Chapter 56

Today, they were discussing Sienna’s wolf.

And, most likely, what to do with me.

A small smile curved on my lips. I wanted to be part of that conversation.

When I reached the door to the meeting room, I didn’t hesitate. I pushed it open with both hands.

The heavy doors swung wide, the echo slicing through the air. Every head in the room turned to look at me.

About twenty people sat around the long table, my father, my stepmother, Sienna, and several elders from my father’s bloodline. Each of them wore the same smug, superior expression, as if this house and everything in it belonged to them.

Their faces shifted at the sight of me, especially Sienna. Her face drained of color immediately, her fingers clutching her dress. My father's expression hardened, his brows knitting together in anger.

"Selene Bloodrose," he said sharply, his tone cutting through the tension. "What do you think you're doing? How dare you just barge in here?"

I smiled, unbothered. "Since the conversation involves me, Father, I decided to join."

A murmur rippled through the room. I could feel the disapproval, irritation, shock radiating from them. I ignored it and stepped further inside, lifting my chin.

"Besides," I said, my voice clear, "I think I deserve to be in this meeting more than anyone else here."

Every eye in the room turned hard, faces tightening with barely contained anger.

My stepmother leaned forward, her painted lips twisting. "Have you lost your damn mind, Selene?" she snapped. "Do you not see the elders sitting here? Not only are you speaking out of turn, but you didn't even greet them when you entered. How disrespectful can you be?"

"These elders have been here since before you were born. Show some manners and know your place."

Oh, I knew my place. But it wasn't beneath them anymore.

I looked at the so-called elders, their faces drawn tight with annoyance and superiority, the kind only people who believed they were untouchable wore.

One of the older men turned to my stepmother with a sigh. "Don't mind her," he said, waving a wrinkled hand dismissively. "She's spoiled and behaves like a child. After so many years, I thought she would finally have the sense to behave properly, but it seems she cannot. She will forever be a fool, unlike her sister."

Then he turned to Sienna, his entire demeanor shifting as though he was looking at some goddess descended from the heavens. His face softened, and he smiled at her warmly. "This child, the two of you raised her well. Her temperament is perfect. Such grace, and restraint. It's a shame, truly, that the white wolf was given to someone who didn't deserve it."

His gaze flicked back to me, his lips curling ever so slightly.

I just looked back at him, amused.

Beside him, my stepmother smiled. "I know, right? Out of the two of them, Sienna has always been the most worthy. I don't know why the Moon Goddess would make such a mistake and give this stupid child the white wolf."

The old man nodded in agreement. "Don't worry about it. Sienna has the black wolf, it's strong, and powerful. I'm sure she'll make us proud."

Sienna looked down at her lap, blushing softly, as though she was shy from the attention. "T-thank you, Elder. I really appreciate it,"

12:54 Tue, Dec 23 MG.

## Chapter 56

The old man smiled at her approvingly before another woman, one of the female elders, turned toward me. Her expression was filled with disgust.

"You're still standing there?" she barked. "When are you going to get out, you damn child? You're not welcome here. We are still discussing what to do with you. Go to your room for now. We will call for you when we have decided your fate."

She sniffed, her chin lifting arrogantly. "Even if you have the white wolf and Alpha Adrian as your mate, that doesn't mean you deserve anything good. Don't offend us further, child, or we'll make your situation harder than it already is."

For a second, I just stared at them before the absurdity of it all hit me. And I laughed.

I laughed so hard my stomach hurt. I laughed until I had to clutch my sides and tears pricked at my eyes.

The room fell silent. Everyone just stared at me like I had lost my mind.

After a moment, I wiped a tear from the corner of my eye and sighed dramatically. "Oh Goddess... these people are so funny," I said, shaking my head. "I honestly don't know if I should be offended or amused. Maybe you should all get checked in the head, just to make sure everything's still working properly."

One of the elders slammed his hand against the table, his voice booming. "What did you just say?!"

I smiled, crossing my arms. "Besides, why should I go to my room?"

Their brows furrowed in confusion.

"Between all of us here," I continued, voice firm, "who do you think deserves to be in this meeting?"

“What?”

“You’re all just a bunch of old people with wrinkled pride and no divine blood to show for it. You’re not directly linked to the Moonborn line. You’re only here because you’re related to my father.”

I took a step closer, my gaze unwavering.

“I am the Moonborn. I carry the white wolf, the Goddess’s own gift.”

I straightened my back, my voice ringing through the room with authority.

“So tell me, who deserves to be here more than me?”

I

田

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

Chapter 37

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 57**

[ 1,325 words ]

Chapter 57

Selene

If looks could kill, I'd have been ten feet under already.

The way they all glared at me, as if they wanted nothing more than to see me torn apart. The elders' faces were so red they looked like overripe tomatoes, ready to burst. And instead of feeling scared or guilty like the old Selene would have, I was amused.

One of them finally found his voice, his hand trembling as he pointed at me. "What on earth are you saying. Selene? Do you dare go against the elders?"

I tilted my head, smirking. "Would you dare go against the Moonborn?"

Silence.

Their mouths hung open, and I could almost hear the collective gasp in the room.

"How dare you old people raise your voice at me," I said calmly, my tone sharper than before. "And then have the nerve to tell me what to do."

The room went still, too stunned to speak. At this point, they looked like they were about to have a collective heart attack. and honestly, if they did, I wouldn't even feel bad about it.

They had never been kind to me. In my past life, they were among those who made my existence a living hell, their self- righteous decisions disguised as wisdom. When Sienna spread the rumor that I had stolen her white wolf, they hadn't even hesitated. They believed her instantly and demanded that I be locked in the dungeon, punished for something I hadn't done.

I hadn't fought back then. I just accepted it because they were elders. Mira had been furious with me, so much that she refused to speak to me for days, choosing to sleep in silence until her anger faded.

This time, Sienna couldn't use that same lie. Everyone had seen my transformation. The white wolf was mine. But I wasn't stupid. Sienna didn't need that lie anymore. She could twist things differently now, play the innocent, the fragile sister wronged by the cruel one. She'd probably manipulated them already, filling their empty heads with her pitiful words. As foolish as it sounded, they'd believe her again.

"That's it!" one of the elders roared, slamming his hand on the table. "Guards! Seize her and take her to the dungeon! Perhaps she will reflect on her words after a few days in the dark!"

I noticed the way my stepmother's lips curved into a satisfied smile, her eyes gleaming with triumph. My father said nothing. The so-called head of the family just sat there,

silent, letting them decide my fate like a puppet without a will. And Sienna didn't move. She just stared at me, her eyes sharp and assessing, like she was trying to figure out what had changed.

The guards stepped forward hesitantly, their boots echoing against the floor. But a low, dangerous growl echoed through the

air.

Mira.

The sound was deep, vibrating through the walls. The guards froze immediately, their eyes wide with fear.

"Step back," I said coolly.

Instantly, they obeyed. They stepped back, bowing their heads, trembling slightly under the pressure of Mira's aura that pulsed through me.

My eyes moved from one terrified face to another.

12:54 Tue, Dec 23

Chapter 57

"I told you," I said, my tone almost casual, "don't raise your voice at the Moonborn."

For the first time, I watched as the elders looked at me with something they'd never shown before. They were scared.

They wouldn't meet my eyes. They sat still, their wrinkled fingers clenched in their laps, their gazes fixed anywhere but on me. Even my stepmother kept her mouth shut for once.

How amusing.

All this time, they thought power would make me cautious, that because I had been dumb and obedient before, I'd still be too weak to use it. They thought wrong.

"Anyway, I only came to tell you that whatever you're planning, stop it. Because no matter what you decide, I won't listen or obey. If you want to give orders, go find someone else to command. I'm done playing the obedient fool."

No one answered me, and I didn't expect them to.

“From this moment,” I said slowly, letting my gaze sweep across the room, “I won’t tolerate disobedience from anyone, especially from servants. I don’t care what anyone thinks of me. As long as I bear the white wolf, I am the true Moonborn. And that means I will not accept any form of disrespect.”

My words were calm, but my eyes found Sienna’s.

It was a warning.

eyes flickered, and she looked away first. I knew she wouldn’t stay quiet forever, she was being careful, calculating, and biding her time. That was fine. I wasn’t after her yet. Right now, I wanted peace. But when the time came for revenge, no one in this room would find peace.

I turned my gaze to my father. He met my eyes, raising a brow, his expression tight.

“According to tradition, Father, when I turn twenty, I have the right to become the head of the temple.”

My father’s face froze. His jaw tightened.

“That means,” I continued, a faint smile curving my lips, “in two years’ time, you will step down from your position and hand it over to me.”

One of the elders slammed his hand against the table, his face red with fury. “You-!”

Another elder quickly reached out and grabbed his sleeve, whispering something that made the man fall silent immediately. My father didn’t speak. But the way his fists clenched on his knees, the veins bulging in his hands, told me enough. He was furious.

Still, I knew he was also rational. Because no matter how much he hated hearing it, what I said was law. He wasn’t supposed to hold that position to begin with, it belonged to my mother. But after her death, he became the head. In my past lives, I had let him keep that position. He ruled for decades, and when he died, he left it to Sienna. And under her rule, the temple fell into ruin.

Even if I didn’t care to sit on that damn throne, I wouldn’t let them have it.

It was obvious my mother loved the temple, and I also needed power.

The title of Moonborn alone wasn’t enough to survive, I couldn’t be Luna of the Mooncrest pack, so I had to carve my own path, one that would make me far more powerful than any Luma could ever be. Because if I didn’t end up with Adrian, Sienna would. And I refused to let either of them stand above me.

I turned to the people seated in the temple hall.

## Chapter 57

“That’s all I came for,” I said coolly, brushing an invisible speck of dust from my sleeve. “You can go back to whatever nonsense you were discussing before.”

With a flick of my wrist, I gestured for them to continue, then turned on my heel and walked out.

No one dared to stop me.

When I stepped through the doors, not one maid dared meet my eyes. Even Emma and Hannah bowed. Their respect was fake, and forced, but it didn’t matter. I smiled anyway, humming softly under my breath.

I turned and there he was. Arthur leaned against the wall, his face still mottled with bruises from the beating Silas had given him. His eyes burned with resentment, but the moment our gazes met, he bowed his head.

Good boy.

He’d learned his place. Next time, he’d think twice before laying a hand on what was mine.

Without sparing him another glance, I brushed past him, barely containing the excitement beneath my calm exterior.

At last, I was going to open the box beneath my bed.

o

田

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 DMG

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 58

[ 1,186 words ]

Chapter 58

Chapter 58

Selene

7

I walked casually along the narrow mountain path, a small bag slung over my shoulder. The air was cool, biting at my cheeks, but I didn't mind. The journey was easy enough, despite how high I'd climbed.

To most people, this part of the mountain was forbidden territory, it was too steep, wild, and filled with unknown creatures that lurked around. No one came here. Which was exactly why I did.

I wanted silence, space, and more than that, I wanted freedom from prying eyes.

The higher I climbed, the quieter it got. After a while, I stopped when I reached a break in the path. A wide gap stretched between two ridges, it was the kind that would make even a skilled warrior hesitate.

'Are you going to make that jump?' Mira's voice echoed in my mind, filled with disapproval. "You could die, Selene. It's a very wide gap."

A smirk tugged at my lips as I stretched my arms and legs, feeling the familiar burn in my muscles. "You keep forgetting who I am, Mira."

"I remember exactly who you are," she said dryly. "You were a general in your past life, but in this one, you're still a young girl. You have maybe one percent of your former strength. Let me transform if you-"

Before she could finish, I ran. The world tilted, the wind roared in my ears, and for a moment, I was flying. The gap blurred beneath me, and the thrill of it made my pulse

race. My cap slipped from my head midair, and my black and white hair whipped wildly around me.

I landed lightly on the other side, knees bending, and feet firm.

A grin spread across my face as I straightened.

'I'm impressed.'

I chuckled and reached into my bag, pulling out another cap and tugging it down over my hair. "It doesn't matter if I have one percent of my strength," I said, dusting off my pants. "My body still remembers everything I've been through."

Mira gave a pleased growl in response, her voice vibrating with approval.

I looked down at my outfit, it was a simple men's clothing, a loose white shirt tucked into dark pants, boots laced tight. The disguise wasn't perfect, but it worked. Nobody would look twice at a wandering boy on the mountain.

I tugged at my sleeve and besides, I used to wear men's clothes all the time in the army. They're far more comfortable than those cursed dresses.

After walking for what felt like hours, I finally reached a clearing, a secluded spot nestled deep within the mountain, surrounded by trees.

I sighed in relief as I lowered myself to the ground, sitting cross-legged on the ground. The cool wind brushed against my

skin.

I reached for the small bag slung behind me. Inside was the box I'd bought from the auction house, the one everyone had mocked as worthless. I pulled it out carefully, brushing away the thin layer of dust that had gathered on the lid.

The moment I opened it, a faint, metallic scent drifted into the air. Inside were what most would call junk.

A red amulet dulled with age. A small, blood-red stone. And the broken fragment of a crimson sword.

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 M

Chapter 58

I placed each object gently on the ground, forming a small circle around me.

In my past life, I'd learned the truth. These weren't useless. The reason I saw their real nature wasn't because of spiritual energy. There was no spiritual energy in the box. The spirit sealed within the box had called out to me because of my strong spiritual powers at that time.

Every piece inside this box had a purpose.

'Selene, you don't have enough energy to release it. If you try, it could kill you.' Her voice echoed softly in my head.

"Then what do you suggest?"

'Use mine,' she replied simply. 'It should be enough to weaken the seal'

I exhaled slowly. She was right, but that was what worried me. Using her energy meant she'd fall asleep again to recover, and Mira didn't have much strength yet. Her power was tied to mine, when I grew, so did she, and right now, we were both still too weak. But before I could argue, she chuckled softly.

'It doesn't matter if I have one percent of my strength, my body still remembers everything I've been through.'

I laughed softly. "Repeating my words back at me, huh?"

'Someone has to.'

"Alright then," I said quietly, looking down at the circle of red relics before me. "Let's do this."

I placed both palms flat on the ground, closing my eyes.

"Mira," I whispered, "lend me your power."

A familiar warmth flooded through me, spreading from my chest down to my fingertips. My breath hitched as the faint glow of Mira's energy wrapped around my hands and sank into the items.

I didn't know how long had passed, but I kept pouring more energy into the items. My body grew weaker and weaker; at one point, I coughed out blood, but I didn't stop. Mira was growing weaker too, but we both pushed on. Just when I thought it wasn't enough, the red amulet, the stone, and the broken sword began to tremble like something long asleep was stirring. Whatever was sealed inside that box was waking up.

The air around me thickened, heavy with a powerful aura. My vision blurred; the world shaking. Then suddenly something bright and red shot out of the items into the sky.

A phoenix.

A massive red phoenix hovered above me, its body made entirely of flame. Its eyes burned like molten gold, fixed sharply on me. Its wings spread wide, casting the mountain in a deep red glow. It was breathtaking and terrifying all at once.

Long ago, there was a powerful red phoenix feared by many. Even though it lived alone, countless people still sought to destroy it out of fear. So many powerful people gathered together to fight it, and after a long, brutal battle, the phoenix lost. Since they couldn't kill it, they trapped its spirit inside three ordinary objects and sealed them in a box.

That was centuries ago. The box had been moved from place to place, forgotten, passed down through time, until it ended up in the auction house, and then in my hands.

The phoenix looked down at me, tilting its head. Then it frowned. Before I could even move, it pressed its burning talon against my neck, forcing me down to the ground.

“We meet again, Moonborn. This time, I will have your neck.”

I stared at it.

12:55 Tue, Dec 23

Chapter 58

Of course.

The phoenix's hatred wasn't for me, it was for my bloodline. It was my ancestor, a Moonborn, who had trapped him. centuries ago.

And now, he wanted revenge.

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 59

[ 1,263 words ]

Chapter 59

Chapter 59

Selene

His talon pressed harder against my throat, sharp enough that one wrong move and my head would have been rolling on the ground. So I stayed still. I wasn't dumb, I knew I wasn't strong enough to fight him right now. Mira was out cold, drained after lending me her strength to break the seal. In my past life, I could have subdued him with one strike. But now, I could barely stand my ground.

Still, even with his claws digging into my skin, I wasn't afraid. I simply stared up at the phoenix and smiled.

He frowned, clearly confused by my expression. "What's so funny, you filthy werewolf?" his voice boomed, echoing through the mountain air. "Do you really think I won't kill you? Do you even know who I am? I could end your life in one breath."

"Oh, I know," I said calmly. "You can kill me if you want."

He tilted his head, the flames in his eyes flickering. "Then why are you so nonchalant when your life is in my hand?"

I met his gaze and said simply, "Because I know you won't kill me."

For a moment, there was silence. Then the phoenix laughed. "I've always hated werewolves," he said, voice thick with disgust. "You creatures are pathetic, fighting among yourselves, desperate for power, never satisfied. You trapped me, a being beyond your comprehension, and you dare call yourselves powerful? Without your precious goddess, you'd all be dust by now! Do you even know how long I was sealed in that cursed box? Over a century! And now that I'm free, I'll bring chaos to your kind. I'll burn every single one of you until nothing remains."

He lowered his head, his molten eyes narrowing into slits. "And I'll start with you. You look like her, the woman who trapped me. But you can't be her. Werewolves don't live that long. That means you're her descendant. Since I can't kill the one who imprisoned me, I'll take her blood instead."

The talon pressed harder against my neck, but I still didn't flinch.

"Do you really hate werewolves that much?" I asked.

He let out a sharp scoff. "What do you think? I was locked away, forgotten, left to rot in silence. Do you have any idea what that does to a spirit?" His flames flared with every word. "You creatures have no honor. No understanding of balance. You'll fight each other over scraps and dare touch what you don't understand. You trapped me because you were afraid. You feared my power."

He leaned closer. "And now, I'll make you regret ever being born."

I looked up at him, meeting his burning stare with steady eyes. "Then do it," I said. "Kill me if that's what you want."

That made him pause.

"You mock me,"

I shrugged. "I wouldn't call it mocking. I just know you can't kill me yet, if you want revenge."

His frown deepened. "You're too bold for someone so weak."

"And you're hot-headed for someone so ancient," I shot back.

For a moment his phoenix-gold eyes darkened; I almost laughed at the sight, then checked myself. No point poking more at a thing that could burn me alive, especially while he had the upper hand.

"You want your revenge, right?" I asked. He didn't answer, but he was listening. "If you want revenge on werewolves for trapping you, then slaying them one by one would be childish, and boring. It wouldn't mean anything compared to what

IM

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 @

Chapter 59

they took from you."

He cocked his head. "Is that so?"

"That's why I'm proposing an alliance," he said smoothly. "You'll stand by me, and in return, I'll give you what you've craved for centuries, satisfaction. You'll have a front-row seat to watch some werewolves suffer. You can enjoy yourself, do whatever you want."

He regarded me for a long moment, then said, "And what makes you think I would accept such a proposal? Your idea is dumb and you are nothing compared to me. Why would I accept anything from a weak werewolf? I am the mighty Phoenix-

"And I have ruled for centuries," I interrupted. "I've commanded power strong enough to bring warriors to their knees. I've destroyed packs before you even learned to say your own name. How many times are you going to repeat that line before you realize it's lost its meaning?"

His words died in his throat. He froze, eyes widening as he instinctively took a step back. "You.... how do you know that?"

I leaned forward, my lips curving into a smile. "You've said it before. So many times, in fact, I've lost count."

"That's impossible," he whispered, shaking his head. "This is the first time we've met."

"No. It's not our first meeting. This is the tenth life we've met."

"What?"

"You heard me. I've died nine times. This is my tenth life."

The firebird tilted his head, watching me closely. His feathers shimmered like molten gold, but the skepticism in his gaze was sharp. "Nine times?"

I nodded. "In all those lives, I never remembered anything. But this time, I do. I remember everything. I remember you. phoenix. We were supposed to meet a few years from now, but I couldn't wait. I need to get stronger before that time comes. And for that, I need your help."

The phoenix blinked, his fiery eyes narrowing slightly. He stared at me without saying a word, his expression unreadable. Just as I began to think he didn't believe me, a knowing look crossed his face.

"No wonder," he said finally, his voice low. "There was something strange about you. You also felt familiar. But I thought it was because of the blood of your ancestor running in your veins. I didn't expect that we had met in your past lives."

I blinked at him. He was taking this far better than I expected.

He tilted his head, wings folding back against his body. "So you're saying that, in those past lives, I agreed to your proposal?"

"Yes. But it wasn't revenge I asked for back then. I was a general. My proposal was to kill the enemy pack and to watch wolves die. You agreed to help me."

He chuckled, the sound rumbling like thunder. "That does sound like something I would do."

I rolled my eyes. Still the same arrogant bird.

"If you died," he said, "does that mean I was the one who eventually killed you?"

How was I supposed to tell him that he didn't get the chance? When the final battle came, he fought for me and died trying to protect me? Damien had killed him. The phoenix that was said to be immortal but he was slain by a single man.

When I didn't say anything, he sighed and looked away. "Whatever it is you're remembering," he said finally, "it's not pleasant." He looked back at me, a smirk tugging at his beak. "Fine, girl. I'll stand by your side and help you until you get your revenge. If you were strong enough to release me this time, it means you're powerful enough to be interesting."

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 ! M

Chapter 59

A grin spread across his face. "I can't wait to see where this journey takes us."

"Neither can I."

田

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

KM

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 60

[ 1,377 words ]

Chapter 60

Chapter 60

Selene

I looked at the phoenix. “You can’t follow me like this,”

He blinked, the embers around him flickering lazily. “Like this?”

“Like a damn walking bonfire,” I said flatly, meeting his golden eyes. “You have to change.”

“Change?”

“Yes. I know you can take a human form.”

For a moment, he went perfectly still. “You were not really lying when you said you knew me in your past lives, one knows I can change to a human form.”

I sighed, shaking my head. Did he really think I was lying to begin with? Why even agree to help me if he doubted what came out of my mouth in the first place?

He tilted his head, that familiar arrogance slipping back into place. “If you know me so well, then you also know I don’t like changing into a human form.”

I raised an eyebrow. “I can’t have a whole-ass phoenix following me around. You made a spectacular entrance when you came out of the relic. The sky practically exploded. People will be running here to see what that flash of light was. If they realize your seal’s been broken, everything I’ve planned will burn before it even begins.”

He frowned, his expression caught somewhere between defiance and understanding. For a moment, I thought he might argue again, but then he sighed.

“Fine,” he muttered. “You owe me for this, kid.”

I smirked. “Sure, sure. Just hurry up.”

The phoenix’s flames began to flicker lower, his wings folding inward as his body began to shift. I watched, fascinated, as the fire condensed and shaped itself into something human. The heat lessened, but his presence remained the same. When the last flicker of light died away, he stood before me as a man.

And what a man.

Tall, broad-shouldered, skin kissed by sunlight, and hair the color of molten copper that shimmered in the fading glow. His eyes still burned gold, fierce and proud. His features were sharp and perfect. He had the kind of beauty that would make any

woman swoon.

If I were ranking the most handsome men I’d ever seen, he’d be second, right after Alpha Damien. Though, if I was being honest, some people might argue he should be first. He was breathtaking, just not my kind of breathtaking.

Still, I couldn’t help the small, incredulous laugh that escaped my lips. “You’re still as vain as ever.”

He smirked, completely unbothered and naked.

“Of course I am, why hide perfection?” His golden eyes glinting mischievously as he caught me staring for a moment too long. “What’s wrong, girl? Are you that bewildered by my size?” he drawled, his voice deep and taunting. “I’ve heard werewolf women love big sizes like mine.”

For a second, I just blinked at him, then a laugh slipped out before I could stop it. “Don’t get ahead of yourself, Phoenix, you’re not the first man I’ve seen naked.”

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 M

Chapter 60

I reached into my bag, pulled out a folded set of men’s clothes I’d taken for him, and held them out. “Put this on before you burn someone’s eyes out with your ego.”

He arched an eyebrow but took the clothes from me with that same smug grin. “You don’t have to sound so ungrateful for

the view.”

I turned around, crossing my arms. There was a rustle behind me as he changed. The faint sound of fabric brushing against his skin made me acutely aware of just how strange this situation was.

“We need to come to an agreement,”

His deep voice rumbled behind me. “What kind of agreement?”

“A pact,” I replied.

A low chuckle escaped him. “A pact? With a weak werewolf?” He paused, clearly savoring the words. “I am the mighty Phoenix-”

I tilted my head slightly, not even bothering to turn around.

He sighed, the sound grudging. “You get the point.”

I smiled faintly. “Yes, I do. And that’s exactly why I want a pact. Because you’re powerful, and I have no guarantee that you won’t decide to betray me or go on some fiery killing spree. You could destroy everything before I even have the chance to stop you.”

He didn’t respond for a while, he finally said. “I understand where you’re coming from, werewolf. Fine, I’ll make a pact that I will never betray you.”

I turned slightly, enough to glimpse his silhouette. “Thank you. I’ll do the same.”

“Perfect, now that we’ve taken care of that, you should turn around and help me.”

“Help you?” I repeated, frowning.

“Yes,” he said, impatient. “Turn around.”

I turned, and instantly pressed my lips together to keep from laughing.

He stood there, proud as ever, but wearing the clothes completely wrong. The shirt was half buttoned, the sleeves uneven, the pants were twisted, and the zipper wasn’t even done properly. It looked like a toddler had tried to dress him while blindfolded.

“Oh... goddess,” I said, trying not to laugh.

He narrowed his eyes. “You have a lot of nerve mocking a mighty Phoenix like me.”

I bit down on my lip, failing miserably to keep a straight face. "I apologize," I managed, chuckling under my breath. "Truly. Let me help you mighty phoenix."

He crossed his arms, that usual arrogant stance of his, but this time, he leaned forward slightly, just enough for me to step closer. His golden eyes followed my every movement as I adjusted the shirt collar and began fixing the buttons, pulling the dark fabric into place over his chest.

When I finished, I leaned back and, without thinking, put my thumb to my mouth and bit down. A pinprick of blood welled and fell. I held my hand out.

He straightened instantly, his expression sharpening as he realized what I was doing.

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 MG.

Chapter 60

I held my hand out to him. "Your turn."

For a moment, he just stared at me, then, without a word, he lifted his hand and did the same, a single drop of crimson glistening on his fingertip. When he pressed his wound against mine, our blood mingled, warm and bright between us.

"I promise never to betray you either," I answered. When our blood met I felt a strange, cold thing stir inside me, something that marked the pact.

When the connection faded, I pulled my hand back and exhaled softly. "Thank you."

He waved a hand carelessly, though I saw the corner of his mouth twitch. "Don't get sentimental on me."

I smirked. "Fine, Lucas."

He froze, blinking at me. "What?"

I tilted my head, trying to hide a smile. "I can't keep calling you 'phoenix' every time. So, I'll call you Lucas. Like it?"

His eyes narrowed slightly, glowing faintly gold. "Nobody has ever dared to name me before, not because they couldn't, but because they wouldn't dare. And yet, you keep doing things that others wouldn't even think about."

"So, you don't like it?" I teased.

He rolled his eyes. "Whatever. It's not bad. I'll... deal with it for now. But don't think I've accepted it."

I grinned. "Sure, sure. Whatever you say, Lucas."

He sighed, rubbing the bridge of his nose as if regretting his choices. "Now, I have things to do," he said. "So I'll take my leave for now."

Before he could turn away, I reached out and grabbed his hand. He looked down at my hand, then up at me.

"You're not running away, are you?"

"I made a pact," he said. "I keep my word. I'll come back to you, after I settle what I need to."

I released his hand slowly. "Alright, I'll wait for you."

He lingered for a moment, his eyes still fixed on where my hand had touched his. Then, without another word, he turned and leapt upward, his body moving fast as he vanished into the trees in a flash of red light.

"He's still as dramatic as ever," I muttered to myself. "But it's good to have you back, Lucas."

田

AD

Comment

Send gift

No Ads

12:55 Tue, Dec 23 G

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.

