

Unbonding the Ruthless Alpha – Mindlinks 6 |

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Chapter 6

Aria's POV

I didn't call a car. I stood at the roadside, replaying every moment of the past two years with Damon.

I used to believe, naively, that the Moon Goddess's arrangement could grow into something. If not love, then at least respect. At least enough to buy a little peace.

Only now did I understand how naive that had been. Yesterday, the last of my hope *died* on a hospital bed. Tonight, whatever was left of it got buried too.

Enough.

This marriage ends here.

I didn't want Damon anymore. I didn't want this Luna identity. I just wanted to be myself.

I took a deep breath, and then-

I reached into the deepest part of my bloodline, into the ancient Grayson legacy, and woke the oldest, most merciless power sleeping there. The power that could sever soul bonds.

It needed no incantation.

No ritual.

Just absolute will to destroy—and the willingness to sacrifice part of myself.

My consciousness *tore* through the night, ignoring distance and barriers, locking onto the one whose soul was still linked to mine through that fragile, fraying thread-

Damon Hawthorne.

With the last of my strength, with all my pain and pride, with hatred and relief twisted together, I forged my will into words—a vow and a curse—and branded them onto his soul:

"I, Aria Grayson..."

Each syllable tasted like blood. It was the first time in two years I'd truly fought back reject you, Alpha of the Silvermoon Pack, as my mate."

The bond snapped instantly

My wolf shuddered once, silently, inside me then went limp

An hour later, I dragged my weakened body back to the Alpha mansion.

I pulled an old suitcase out from the back of the closet, the same one I'd carried from the Grayson estate two years ago. Every gown, every piece of jewelry that belonged to

Mrs Hawthorne, the Luna, Hleft behind. I packed only a few old clothes, the letter my father had left me, and yesterday's discharge papers

+25 Points

-the ones stamped with proof of my miscarriage.

Once I was done, I carried the nearly empty suitcase downstairs.

"Luna–Luna, what happened? Where are you going?" Amy caught up with me at the door, her eyes red.

"Don't call me that anymore, Amy" I said quietly. "I'm not the Luna."

My face was pale as death, but my eyes held a clarity I hadn't–felt in two years.

I pushed open the mansion doors and walked out into the last of the rain.

I didn't look back.

Damon's **POV**

The Maybach's engine roared through the pre–dawn streets..

My hands gripped the steering wheel so hard that veins bulged across my knuckles.

The hours at the hospital had been torture. Claudia lay crying in her hospital bed, while deep in my soul, that hollow feeling from the mate bond being forcibly broken wouldn't go away.

It felt like a cold needle lodged in my chest. The tearing sensation had stopped after a few minutes, but the unsettling loss of control kept spreading through my blood.

Aria.

That woman had to be behind this.

To get my attention. To secure her position. Her tactics were getting more sophisticated–she actually dared to break the mate bond to threaten me.

"You think this little stunt can threaten me?"

I laughed bitterly through clenched teeth. Rhein was panicking in my head. The whole drive, I'd been rehearsing what I'd say when I caught her. I'd expose her game without mercy and make her pay for tonight.

LUCK DRAW

Unbonding the Ruthless Alpha – Mindlinks 7

Chapter 7

Damon's **POV**

The Maybach screeched to a stop at the villa's entrance.

"Aria! Come out!"

My shout echoed through the empty living room No response.

I charged upstairs and kicked the master bedroom door open.

"Aria! Drop the act-"

The words died in my throat.

The room was dead silent. The sheets lay scattered and cold across the bed. Her scent had faded to almost nothing.

No tears. No pretense. No sign of the woman who always looked at me with those loving, wounded eyes.

All that greeted me was emptiness.

I stood in the empty room, motionless.

The sheets were rumpled, and her scent in the air had faded to almost nothing. On the vanity, her wedding ring lay alone on the marble surface, catching the cold morning light.

I stared at that ring for a long time.

She's serious.

The moment that thought crossed my mind, I turned and strode out of the room.

"I need to know Luna's location within the hour."

But two full hours of searching turned up nothing.

She'd vanished like smoke, disappearing into the darkest crack before dawn.

My men combed through every intersection, bus stop, and taxi record around the estate. Nothing. No ride-sharing history, no surveillance footage—not even a clue about which direction she'd gone

Rhein paced restlessly in the back of my mind, letting out low, anxious howls

The mate bond was broken I couldn't sense her location, couldn't pick up her scent, couldn't feel anything

about her at all

The emptiness from losing that connection was far more unbearable than I'd expected

I didn't want to admit that

"Alpha" My second in command, Lucas, spoke quietly, his expression hesitant Should we search area?"

expand the

I **didn't answer** right away.

+25 Points

Outside the window, dawn was slowly creeping across the horizon, its pale light washing over the world **that** last night's storm had left behind.

"Check everywhere she might have gone," I said, my voice colder than expected.

"Friends, family, workplace. Search them all."

I paused. "And—check her medical records."

Lucas froze for a second, then nodded and left.

I turned and walked back into the room, stopping in front of the vanity. I stared at the wedding ring again.

That faint white line on her finger flashed through my mind—the mark left behind by the ring.

I reached out and picked up the ring, closing my hand around it.

Aria's POV

I went back to the one place that had always been mine, long before this marriage: my design studio, on the other side of the city. I'd built it with my own hands before the Grayson name fell, and I'd kept it quietly alive through two years of being someone's unwanted Luna. It was small. It was mine. No one in it had ever once looked at me like I was a debt to be collected.

For the first time in two years, I had a door that locked from the inside, and no one with the right to open

1. **it.**

I told myself that was enough. That it had to be.

A week later, I had all but moved into the studio.

The mountain of work waiting for me was the best distraction. I buried myself in blueprints and models, day and night, trying to fill the emptiness with anything but thought.

I was working late again *one* night, eyes burning from staring at a complex architectural design, when the studio door swung open.

"Knew I'd find you here, killing yourself."

I looked up. My best friend, Astrid, stood in the doorway holding two cups of coffee, shaking her head

"What are you doing here?"

"Making sure you're still alive. From the looks of it, barely"

She set a cup on my desk and gave me a once-over, shaking her head "You look like hell Seriously have you even been eating? You're skin and bones, pale **as** a ghost, with circles under your eyes like you haven't slept in a week

I looked down, stirring my coffee, silent

Her senses were sharper than most

"Ania," she said, sitting across from me, her tone serious "Look at me What's going on?" slowly **raised** my head.

A

25 Points

"I **had** a miscarriage. And I asked Damon for a divorce."

Astrid's hand, holding the coffee, froze mid-air. The light-blue eyes that were always

full of warmth showed

their first crack.

“You what?” Her voice was soft, like she couldn’t believe what she’d heard. “How dare that **jerk**...”

The coffee cup hit the desk with a thud, brown liquid sloshing over the side, scalding Astrid’s hand. She

didn’t seem to notice.

Her gaze dropped to my empty left ring finger.

Where my wedding ring used to be, there was only a pale band of skin.

“You took it off.” Her voice trembled slightly.

“Yeah.”

“Good! That’s great!” Astrid shot to her feet, pacing the small studio like an angry lioness. “That jerk! How dare he? Does he even know...”

She cut herself off, swallowing her words, then looked at me with heart-wrenching pity.

“You saved his life, Aria! Three years ago, in the Northern Wastes, the ice wolves would have torn him apart if not for you!”

LUCK DRAW >

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Unbonding the Ruthless Alpha – Mindlinks 8 |

Chapter 8

Aria’s POV

“And this is how he repays you... with a side piece and a lost child?”

That was the only secret between him and me.

A secret I never spoke of.

And Damon had long forgotten.

“It’s in the past,” I said, lowering my eyes. “It doesn’t matter.”

“It doesn’t matter?” Astrid’s voice rose. “You’re a person, not a doormat! That bastard has walked all over you for years—how can you be okay with this?”

Her words cut deep.

“Come on!” Astrid suddenly grabbed my hand, yanking me out of my chair. “You’re done hiding behind work. Today, I’m taking you out. We’re going shopping. We’re maxing out that jerk’s credit cards!”

She didn’t give me a choice, pulling me out of the studio.

Half an hour later, we were seated in the VIP lounge of the city’s most luxurious boutique.

“Bring out your new arrivals for Ms. Grayson—dresses, handbags, jewelry, the works.”

Astrid snapped her fingers imperiously.

The staff sprang into action. Soon the table was buried under a mountain of designer merchandise.

"That one, and that, oh—and those." Astrid gestured carelessly. "Wrap them up."

"Wait." I stopped her hand. "Astrid, I—"

"I know what you're going to say," she cut me off. "Relax. Spending his money? We won't feel guilty about it for a second."

She pulled the black-gold secondary card from my wallet.

The next second, I reached out, took it from her fingers, and tucked it back into the deepest part of my wallet. Then I pulled out one of my own cards.

I'm done with Damon Completely. That includes his money

"Use mine," I smiled at Astrid, who was staring at me "Call it my pathetic pride but even so, I still want to protect it

"Okay. Yours it is" Astrid smiled back with pride

I wasn't being careful with money I was letting it all out—two years of pent up hurt, frustration, and bitterness With every swipe, the heavy weight in my chest felt a tiny bit lighter

Walking past a men's boutique, I stopped

+25 Puuta

In the window **was a** deep blue tie with subtle silver star patterns. Understated. Elegant.

My brother's birthday was coming up.

"Want to **check** it out?" Astrid asked, reading my mind.

I nodded.

I picked up the tie, feeling the smooth silk between my fingers. My brother would love it.

"Could you wrap this one for me, please?" I asked the clerk.

"Of course!"

Just as the clerk reached for it, another hand with bright red nails snatched it away.

"Sorry. We're taking this one."

A sharp, familiar voice.

I turned.

Lilith.

Damon's sister.

And next to her, the last person I wanted to see.

Claudia.

She wore a white maternity dress, her baby bump obvious, one hand resting gently on it, the other linked with Lilith's arm. She saw me and put on a perfectly measured look of

surprise and apology.

"Aria? **What** a coincidence, running into you here."

Lilith didn't bother pretending. She looked me up and down, her disdain crystal clear.

"Well, if it isn't Aria. What, broke already? Shopping for discount stuff?"

She waved the tie. "Your taste isn't bad, though. This would look great on my brother. Don't you think, Claudia?"

Claudia gave a soft smile, her eyes on the tie. "It is lovely. Damon would probably like it. Just like that, she stamped the gift I'd picked for my brother with Damon's name.

My clerk looked uncomfortable "I'm sorry, ladies, but this tie was selected first by Mrs Hawthorne

"Mrs. Hawthorne?" Lilith let out a laugh like she'd heard the funniest joke "You've got the wrong **person** My brother's real mate is right here"

She patted Claudia's pronounced belly affectionately

"As for her"-Lilith's venomous gaze landed on me -"she's **just** a knockoff who's about to be thrown out."

Knockoff

+25 Points

Lilith's shrill **voice** hung in the boutique's **air**, grating against everyone's nerves.

The atmosphere turned thick and heavy.

"Who are you calling a knockoff?"

Before I could speak, Astrid stepped protectively in front of me. In her towering heels, she looked down at Lilith like a wolf defending her pack—fierce and unflinching.

"Look who it is. The Hawthorne family's spoiled little princess." Astrid crossed her arms, her lip curling. "**Did** you leave your brain at home? Can't even tell who the real Mrs. Hawthorne is?"

Lilith flushed, turning to Claudia for backup.

Claudia immediately put on a pained expression, gently tugging Lilith's sleeve. "Lilith, don't. Let the past stay in the past..."

"No!" Lilith snapped. "Aria, don't you have any shame? First you steal another woman's mate, and now *you* let your bitch friend talk to me like that?"

"Who are you calling a bitch?!" Astrid's face darkened.

"You. Bitch!"

Her scathing look raked over Astrid from head to toe.

"Lilith, shut up!" I snapped.

"Who the hell do you think *you* are, ordering me around? Let me make something clear—as long as I'm here, you're not taking another damn thing from Claudia. Ever."

Lilith pulled a card from her purse, slapping it on the counter and ordering the stunned clerk, "I don't have time for this. Just ring up the tie!"

The clerk looked from Lilith to me, helpless.

"What are you waiting for? Ring it up—unless you want me to report you and get you fired!"

"Wait just a minute, please."

As the nervous clerk reached for the card, I pulled another one from my wallet.

The store's highest-tier membership card.

Before the Grayson family went bankrupt, I'd been a regular at this store

I didn't care about the petty **drama** with Lilith But going after Astrid? That crossed the line

Without a word, I placed it gently on the counter

The clerk's breath caught She looked at the card with far more respect than she'd shown Lilith. Immediately, she took the tie **back** from Lilith and carefully handed it to me

"I'm so sorry, Mrs. Hawthorne" Then she turned to Lilith apologetically. "I'm afraid store policy requires me to prioritize our highest tier members

Comments

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Unbonding the Ruthless Alpha – Mindlinks 9 |

Chapter 9

Aria's POV

Lilith's **face** turned beet red

This was worse than a slap.

"You!" She pointed at me, her whole body shaking, "Aria! Don't get so full of yourself! *You* can only act this way because of my brother! You think you're actually special?"

"You have no idea, do you? The only reason he's even with you is because our grandfather *forced* him into

it!"

"Aria Grayson, you are nothing! You and your murderer father are cut from the same cloth! Both rotten to

the core!"

Murderer.

The word cut through the store.

Every head turned. I could feel their stares—judging, hungry for gossip.

My heart hammered against my ribs.

"You bitch!" Astrid moved before I could think, her hand cracking across Lilith's face.

"No!"

I tried to stop her, but it was too late.

In that split second, a figure in white threw herself in front of Lilith.

SMACK!

The sharp sound of the slap echoed through the boutique.

Everyone stared, stunned.

Astrid's hand had landed on Claudia's face.

The force sent Claudia stumbling backward. Five angry red marks bloomed across her pale cheek. She covered her face, tears instantly welling up.

"Claudia!"

Lilith shrieked, rushing to support the swaying Claudia.

"Claudia! Are you okay? Oh my god, your face!" She whirled around, screaming at me like a madwoman.

"Aria! You witch! You had your friend hit a pregnant woman! My brother will make you pay for this!"

The scene descended into chaos.

+25 Points

In the center of it all, a voice—cold and furious—cut through the noise like an ice blade.

"What the hell is going on here?"

I turned.

Damon stood not far away.

He was in a perfectly tailored black suit, hair impeccable, clearly here for some important business.

And right now, his handsome face was a storm cloud.

His gaze swept over everyone before landing on me like two icy spears.

Damon's POV

Aria.

I'd turned the entire pack upside down looking for her, searching like a man gone mad—every building, every road, every face, combed through again and again. And after all that desperate effort, after coming up empty no matter where I looked, here she was, appearing right in front of me.

The frantic unease that had clung to me like a nightmare for two nights vanished in that instant, too.

Like a string pulled taut for far too long, it finally snapped. Before I even understood why, a long breath was already easing out of my chest on its own.

Relief.

I refused to use that word for what I was feeling. But there it was—impossible to chase away, impossible to deny.

My feet carried me toward her before I could stop them. Rhein clawed and bit beneath my skin, wildly venting two days' worth of longing for our mate.

-Just let her *get away with it this once*.

The night before, I'd already made up my mind: even when I found her, I wouldn't hold it against her. She was still my Luna.

I would not accept her rejection.

But what was I seeing now?

On my own turf, inside the Hawthorne Group's own mall, she was tormenting my sister and Claudia

That look on her face. It was too familiar.

Just like her murderer of a father

What was she trying to do this time? How dare she? *Did* she mean to do to my sister and Claudia exactly what her father had done to Liam by the very same methods?

In that instant, all the blood in my body rushed up to my head The roar of fury **in** my veins drowned out Rhein's pleading.

walked toward her. With every step, the last scraps of my patience were ground to dust.

Somments

LUCK DRAW >

Unbonding the Ruthless Alpha – Mindlinks 10 |

Aria's POV

I thought he'd yell at me, humiliate me.

But I was wrong.

Without even asking why, he stopped in front of me and raised his hand—not to hit me, but in a gesture even more insulting.

He shoved me.

Hard.

In my heels, off-balance, I stumbled backward.

The world spun.

Thud.

I landed hard on the cold, unforgiving marble floor.

"I warned you, Aria." He looked down at me. Those dark eyes I'd once lost myself in held nothing for me now but pure hatred and cold killing intent.

"Behave."

Then he went straight to Claudia, carefully gathering her into his arms, his voice filled with a panic and tenderness I'd never heard before.

"Claudia, are you hurt? Is the baby... is the baby okay?"

Pain shot through my lower back. Something in my abdomen tore, so sharp I saw stars and nearly passed out—but none of it mattered when I looked up.

"Aria

Astrid's voice sounded far away.

Anal Your wrist—we need to get you to a hospital!"

I shook my head, leaning on her as I struggled to my feet

My entire focus was on Damon

7

We stared at each other from a few feet away He looked at me like I was a stranger **causing** a scene.

"Aria, I underestimated you to keep your Mrs Hawthorne title, you'll really stoop to anything

"Is this your new act? He finally spoke Make a public scene, hurt Claudia What's next?

What's next? I laughed

+25 Points

And I moved.

I stepped sideways, caught Lilith's wrist mid-swing with my left hand, and clamped down. Hard.

"Ah-!" Lilith cried out, her wrist trapped **in** my grip.

"Let go! Aria, you psycho bitch! Let go!"

"Aria, please stop. Lilith is innocent. It's all my fault..." Claudia's voice trembled as she touched her red cheek, summoning tears with practiced ease.

"I know... you must have misunderstood me... I never meant to come between *you*. If me being here upsets you so much, I'll leave. I can go right now..."

Her retreat, her words—they all implied I was a jealous woman driven to violence.

It lit the final fuse.

"A misunderstanding?" I looked at her, enunciating every word. "What should I misunderstand? That the baby isn't his? Or that he didn't leave me on a mountain road in a storm... for you?"

Claudia's face went white.

Damon's eyes narrowed.

And Lilith? She struggled more violently.

"You pathological liar! Just like your murderer father rotting in jail! Only know how to

frame people!"

Murderer.

The word stabbed deep.

She'd crossed the line.

"Lilith, my voice became ice-cold. "Apologize to my father"

"What? Lilith seemed not to understand.

I squeezed harder, my nails digging in.

"Ah! It hurts' Let go!" she screamed.

"Apologize, I repeated, my eyes devoid of all warmth "For what you just said Apologize to my father

"Why should I-

"Ariel Enough!

A large hand closed around my left wrist with a hundred times more force than I was using

Damon

He'd stepped forward, trying to pry my hand off Lilith's wrist like I was a misbehaving child

"Let go He commanded, his voice bone chillingly cold
apt

He didn't even ask what Lilith had said.

In his mind, I was always the one at fault.

I stared at him. His face was inches from mine, full of nothing but disgust.

Something broke inside me. I laughed-hysterical, almost crying.

My eyes dropped to where his hand crushed my wrist, then back to Lilith,
her *face* twisted in pain.

What a joke.

"Let go?" I looked up into his cold eyes, my voice carrying a thread of desperate, final threat. "Fine."

"Make her apologize."

"Or I'll break her wrist. Right here in front of you."

"Damon. Your choice."

LUCK DRAW >