

The Better Luna

UNWORTHY

I had to iron Bode's shirts since he was staying overnight. He was very particular about the shirts he wanted to wear. When Ben arrived for him, we shared the usual morning greeting. I didn't know how to really gage myself with him since Bode warned me off to practically stay away from him. I had known Ben for years, I would try and talk to him about that when he returned, whatever it was. I couldn't see any problem with Ben, he was loyal.

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Ben didn't seem particularly happy to be staying overnight. He hadn't been fond of visiting the Wild Storm pack or anything much about them. He'd argued that as Beta he should stay behind, in case anyone attacks. But Bode was resolute that we were impenetrable and more than capable of warding off any attack which is true, and anyone who dared to even try would be crazy. He took Ben with him at all times. So, I barely even saw him either and now I wasn't supposed to talk to him.

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I gently placed Milo's arm through the thick white sweater as he distractedly gazed at his gold coloured stuffed lion. He was inseparable from it. No matter how many times his father had tried to coerce him to take the stuffed wolf at the store, he was adamant to take the lion one. I think it was because of the colour mostly... well Bode not so much. He found it a harmless betrayal.

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"There you are. Nice and warm." I praised him. It was a bit chilly today due to the rain.

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I planted a quick kiss on his forehead, brushing back the dark strands of hair on his forehead. He glanced up quickly and I was amazed as always at how much he looked like Bode. He had the same dark hair and intense deep green eyes. It warmed my heart as I looked at his pink tinged cheeks.

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“Dada is a lion?” he asked, holding up the lion and I smile brightly at him.

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“Yes, Dada is a lion.” I reply softly.

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I can already imagine Bode’s facial expression at this and I try to hold in my laughter.

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“H-he can change into lion?” he asked cheerfully, dangling the golden colored stuffed toy. It was adorable. His green eyes showed excitement and I laughed.

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“Yes, Dada can change into a big lion and when he comes home you can ask him to. He can even roar for you too.”

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He was talking about us shifting. He had seen a pack member shift last week while we were out and about fixing up the cottages for the new members. It was all that he has been fascinated by ever since. Bode used to shift for him once upon a time.

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I gather his things that I had already packed into his bag that is decorated with tiny lions, slinging it over one arm and I take him up in the other. It was a struggling challenge but it was best this way. He was naturally curious at his age and prone to running off.

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The packhouse is three elaborate stories stretching wide across never ending acres of land. The top floor was ours; the second floor was for visiting family or guests and had Bode’s office for pack matters that required privacy, and the last floor hosted our pack meetings and so forth. It was where everyone convened, especially over food.

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I catch a glimpse of bright blonde hair while heading down the stairs to the main floor. Clayton, who was heading into the hall, having spotted us, backtracked and rushed up the steps to take the shoulder bag from me.

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“Let me help you with that Luna.” he sighed, and I readily gave him Milo’s bag, grateful for the easing ache in my shoulder.

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“Thank you.” I responded in relief.

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“It’s ok,” he replies confidently with a boyish grin and motions at Milo. “I’d take him too if I could.”

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He couldn’t take Milo because of an unspoken rule among wolves when it came to their sons. Male wolves were possessive and it was deemed disrespectful to have another male wolf carrying around their child without their permission. I shyly tried not to smile at the image of Clayton’s heavy bulking figure carrying Milo’s bag ahead of us with all the baby decorations on it.

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" I-"

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“Can you change into lion?!” Milo blurts out, cutting him off and I pray he doesn’t start demanding Clayton turns into a lion in the middle of the hallway. He was now prone to little tantrums at his age when told no.

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Clayton looks at me confused and it seems to dawn on him when he glances at the stuffed lion. Milo looks at him expectantly and I know what that intense stare means. He’s determined to see him shift.

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“Yes I can shift but not right now.” Clayton sighs in fake disappointment. “I can only shift when it’s dark outside. Right now, it’s pretty sunny outside so I can’t.”

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Milo looks at him in fascination, thinking his words over, then he turns to look at me for confirmation. I nod in agreement. I hope he doesn’t connect the dots that the pack

member he saw didn't shift at night. He diverts his attention back to the lion and we continue for a bit in silence.

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"Thank you. You're going to be an amazing father." I tell Clayton gratefully.

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"I hope so." he replies, a small blush tinting his cheeks and half of his mouth quirks up in a smile.

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Clayton was just shy of eighteen, tall and bulking with boyish features, light blonde hair and the kindest personality. He never missed an opportunity to help out and he treated everyone the same, with respect. Milo took the opportunity to shift his lion toy to gape at Clayton's looming figure as we head towards the dining hall.

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A small pang of guilt hit me. Although he was still young, he was growing up so fast and with the recent events, I wished Bode would spend more time with him to develop more of a father and son bond.

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Bode and I had met at an Alpha summit that I had gone to with my father. That's how we found out we were mated. To say I and others were shocked was an understatement. I come from a very small, non- traditional pack, three hours drive from here. My father was proud to say the least that I was fated to the prestigious and coveted son of Alpha Victor.

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He was the guy all the girls in the packs had drawn hearts around and were vying for, hoping to be mated to. My mother was worried to wits end which was perfectly understandable. Their family was highly esteemed and powerful. His parents though they were nice couldn't exactly hide their disappointment, worst of all he didn't reject me.

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I on the other hand had been terrified. They were an extremely large pack, everything had left me open-mouthed at how large and exquisite everything was here at the Grey Oak pack. How could I live up to their greatness and expectations?

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There was nothing great about me. In terms of looks I was plain with light chestnut brown hair and hazel eyes. I wasn't any beauty. I didn't have the best figure either and I was never thin even when I had tried dieting. I was stout and slightly chunky. Personality wise, I was okay, everyone describes me as nice and kind, but I don't have the bubbly and grand personality Luna Camilla has.

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But Bode was everything, he was everything and even more than I could ever have asked for in a mate and lover. There was nothing I could fault him for. He didn't seem to care that I didn't check all the boxes, that I wasn't ideal or special and I decided that I would do my best and give it my all to be a decent luna. I would try and work my hardest. Sure, we had a few mishaps but we stuck together.

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We pass the entry to the pack's elaborate dining hall and there was a decent amount of persons inside despite the rain. I was later than normal to my rounds but today felt like the first in a very long time that I have taken the smallest of time for myself. As we headed around the corner, I faltered in my steps when I heard the sharp voice from the kitchen.

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"The bitch should have been up already."

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I wince at her words. Georgia was here.

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Georgia is Bode's younger sister. She was spoilt. She was extremely beautiful and smart. Countless men had vied for her hand as luna but she'd refused them all saying they weren't good enough. She would only be mated to the best of the best.

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She would visit the pack from time to time. Georgia was given or rather gave herself the role a few years ago to oversee the pack's law firm business, which she doesn't really do because Bode still did all of the overseeing. She mostly just lives lavishly and complains how exhausted she is whenever someone asks her how it was going.

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The acting CEO of the company has seen her only once since she assumed her role. Georgia has always had it easy, especially with Bode doing everything. In his eyes she was still his little baby sister who could do no wrong. No matter what she said, no matter what she did. She had everyone wrapped around her finger.

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She knew when to fake cry, she knew when to pout, she knew when to play being the poor and innocent little sister.

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She didn't live on the pack grounds as she insisted she wanted to enjoy the finer things in life, which included partying heavily with her friends but I believe it's just because she doesn't want to do any work or have any responsibilities.

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"This is what happens when you get trailer trash to do a respectable job. Mom would have been up way before this, at the crack of dawn, running everything in tip top shape and making sure everything was perfect." she voices in annoyance.

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Milo perks up at the sound of his aunt's voice. Clayton glances at me as we're just standing in the hallway. He had slowed down beside me. I was bracing myself for it, shifting Milo from one arm to another.

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I was working as hard as I could, around the clock. I didn't know what else to do. I have been going to bed late and waking up early before Milo to complete my morning rounds after which I headed back for him most mornings when he woke up. This morning was just an exception because of the rain and well... Bode.

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Georgia has never liked me and she intended to make sure everyone else didn't as well. She ignores me when Bode isn't around, like I was not worth looking at and when he was, just the bare, minimal greeting she would throw my way like I was charity.

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She also made it no secret to everyone in the pack of her strong dislike for me for her brother or her family. However, I would be lying if I said her words didn't hurt. They

hurt, every single time. I tried to be friends with her in the beginning for Bode's sake. Her direct words were "If you lose the weight, I might consider it."

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I have given up on the thought of her being cordial towards me or having some sort of friendship. I could hear the clink of glass and she was probably drinking her usual go to which is a glass of perfectly aged red wine. She was louder and harsher today than normal.

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"When you pick a Luna, you cannot pick a pig. She's lazy. Some women deserve to be hit, maybe it would serve as motivation to get her shit together. I cannot believe Bode lets this happen. It's no wonder she's so overweight and can't seem to lose the extra pounds she's put on since she's had the baby. Not that it would make any much of a fucking difference." she concluded the high pitched rant and I felt shame lance through me. I knew I had put on a few pounds since I had Milo but I didn't think it was that bad. "I hope Milo doesn't pick up any of her traits or looks."

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I tried to take another deep breath. I didn't dare say anything in response to Georgia's emotional attacks and degradation. I would never win, she was his little sister, the baby of the family. It was bad enough I wasn't ideal, it would be worse to cause family conflicts especially when there was none before.

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His mother, Luna Camilla was perfection personified and it is hard being Luna after her. They came from a line of beautiful lunas, who had a certain poise and look. Bode's mother, Camilla, the former Luna, was elegant and sophisticated. She looked well on Bode's father's arm. I wasn't much to look at or poised. There were grumblings but I took it in stride. I could understand. But it didn't help that my sister-in-law talked about all of my downfalls in front of the pack members.

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I mustered up the courage to push forward. Clayton was doing a good job of pretending he wasn't hearing anything and keeping his features neutral as we finally entered the kitchen. As I came into view of the large kitchen, I could see her beautiful rich dark brown hair streaked with blonde highlights pulled back into a high ponytail that curled nicely at the ends. She was dressed sleekly and comfortably in expensive dark washed jeans, black boots and a black sweater paired with the very pricey and large sparkling diamond earrings and necklace set that she made Bode get her.

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"There is my adorable nephew!" screams Georgia, she pushes past Clayton with her arms thrown wide to readily take Milo. She ignores my greeting and he giggles as she showers him with kisses.

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I greet Jen, the head of the kitchen and the other women who work there as well. The kitchen will always be a gawking point for the pack. It was extremely large not to mention state of the art and luxurious. Everyone was spread out widely over various counters prepping the meals. Now that my hands were free, I politely thanked Clayton and took Milo's bag. He quickly made his exit to the dining hall, and I placed the bag on a chair feeling self-conscious. I felt uncomfortable in everyone's presence having heard Georgia ranting before I arrived. It was awkward.

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"I can't imagine what it'll be like when I have kids." Georgia cooed loudly at Milo. "They'll be happy their mommy isn't trailer trash like your mommy is."

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I feel my heart plummet and I open my mouth to tell her not to do that but stop myself short. I can feel my face heat up. Whatever problems she had with me didn't give her the right to talk about me like that to or in front of my child. I try to suppress the anger burning inside me and fight the urge to take Milo back from her. It's different when she would just talk badly to me in front of others but to do it with my son there in front of everyone left me appalled.

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"Don't worry Auntie will take you right under her wings." she marvels to the kitchen staff, taking sip from her glass. "You look just like Bode. Isn't he just adorable?"

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"Absolutely, he's going to be something when he gets older." praises Maribel.

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"Of course, he will be. He takes after us." she replies snidely and Jen glances at me. "Can you imagine if he'd gotten his mother's genes, Moon Goddess forbids."

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My stomach tightens and I focus on Milo who is showcasing his stuffed toy to her. Milo is babbling about shifting to Georgia and I know he's probably asking her to shift. I turn to the everyone in the kitchen, trying not to dwell on Georgia's remarks and ensure everything is in running smoothly.

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Jen more than assures me there isn't anything that needs my attention in the kitchen. There's a pitiful look in her eyes and it makes me feel even worse. Out of all the women in the kitchen, Jen was more like a friend if anything. Our friendship grew because she was the head of the kitchen staff and with our daily interactions for things such as stock taking and her warm personality it was inevitable.

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"Will you be staying for the initiation of the Wild Storm pack next week?" I ask Georgia softly.

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"Yep." she replies. I'm surprised she answered me and her green eyes flicker to me. "Mom and Dad will be here as well. They'll be here to show their support of course. They wouldn't miss it for the world. Bode will practically be the king of wolves. That would make me the princess. I always knew I was royalty."

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"That's good." I reply, genuinely happy his parents will be here to see everything that he has accomplished over the past few weeks. I couldn't imagine how proud they must be of him, just as I was. Everyone was.

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"It's going to be an amazing event, it's all anyone talks about around these parts for weeks now. Luna here has planned everything beautifully. I'm just happy we finished everything on time." Jen remarks.

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"Well, I had an amazing team." I counter. Jen was amazing and I couldn't take all the credit because in truth everyone pitched in.

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Jen helped even when she didn't have to. Even when everyone had turned in, she would stay with me and harass me to call it a night. Her mate had died in an attack a few years

ago. She now lived alone because all three of her sons being grown, found their mates and moved out ages ago.

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“If you had proper leadership, everything should have been finished way earlier than this. You would have had tons of free time.”

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“I think the designs, renovations and decorations took in more time than we expected.” I refuted calmly. A lot of the places were unused and therefore needed some renovations. Some of the AC units were outdated and a few other things.

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“I still don’t see what took so much time plus the new designs are tacky and tasteless. If I had arrived earlier I would’ve told you to scrap them.” Georgia huffs, jumping down my throat and her beautiful rich brown curls swing back and forth. I see two of the women giggle at her comments.

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“Then again you have to have been grown with a certain taste. Your former pack was practically a trailer park. It’s exhausting talking to you.” she says and her nose crinkles up.

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I take that as my cue to shut up. My pack was not a trailer park. It was small but it was adequate. The conversation continues to flow and I head in the fridge for a drink. Georgia talks excitedly with the staff, she has grown up with them since she was little. I decide on an iced coffee drink. As I open the can her eyes cut to me.

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“Moon Goddess Pen! You’re already the size of a whale! Do you see how disgusting you look? I thought that would be a big enough hint to stop eating! Stop eating! Drink water?! Have you ever tried water? Do you know what water is? Can your incompetent fat ass comprehend that?!” Georgia shouts angrily and the whole room has now turned to look at me. Milo is looking at me.

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The coldness from the can bites into my fingers. I fight the tightness of my throat and the corner of my eyes sting. The room is so quiet you can hear a pin drop. I can hear my own breathing. I place the can back in the fridge, feeling sick to my stomach.

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I head over to her and I quietly take Milo from her. He knows something has happened but he doesn't quite understand what. She reluctantly releases him. Her green eyes bore down on me, all glimmering and proud.

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"You may have your opinions about me but you don't get the right to talk to me like that in front of my son." I breathe out.

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I can see the flicker die in her eyes and I take up Milo's bag and quietly leave the room.

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"I'm sorry." I tell Milo and kiss his temple when we are far enough down the hall and out of everyone's hearing. "I'm so sorry."

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