

His Lost Lycan Luna

By Jessica Hall

Book 1

Chapter 1

IVY

The orphanage headmistress, Mrs. Daley, is in an excellent mood this morning. The Lycan King is visiting the orphanage today, and the old hag is unusually excited. The Lycan King hasn't been here once in the eight years that Abbie and I have lived here, so we don't know what to expect. Mrs. Daley, however, does. She expects perfection and not a thing out of place.

She wasted no time in giving Abbie and me more tasks than we could possibly handle, so many chores we both knew would never be done in time for his arrival.

As I am rushing the dirty laundry downstairs, I can hear Mrs. Daley as she hums along to the radio in the kitchen. As quietly as possible, I sneak past her, not wanting her to add any more chores to the never-ending list Abbie and I already have.

Slipping out to the sunroom attached to the rear porch, I see Abbie with Tyson. She's raised him since he was a baby. Mrs. Daley wanted to kill him. She hated that he cried all the time, so Abbie took him, promising to keep him from bothering her, and she has raised him ever since. I know leaving him behind will be hard for her.

“What are you standing around for, Rogue? Get moving! I expect nothing out of place when the King arrives. You better pray to the Moon

Goddess you're finished in time, or I will teach you a lesson you'll never forget!" Mrs. Daley screeches at me.

I jump, tossing the basket down, and turn to face her. "Yes, Mrs. Daley," I tell her, bowing my head.

Her fingers wrap around her cane as she narrows her wrinkled eyes at me. "Where is the other rogue brat?" she asks.

I swallow down my dread, watching her fist the tip of her cane.

"I tasked her with the bathrooms and laundry while you finished the dining hall, didn't I?" she asks.

"I finished quicker, so I thought I would help her, Ma'am," I lie.

"Very well. Now get back to work," she snaps. Just as I turn back to the dirty laundry, her cane smacks the side of my arm, stopping me. "Oh, and tell your little rogue friend, the butcher said he will see her at the town square. He's hoping the Alpha chooses to auction you both instead of killing you. He has big plans for a harlot like her," she laughs cruelly.

Tears burn the backs of my eyes at her words. My hands shake, and bile rises up my throat. The butcher is a vile man, despicable. Instantly, my mind goes to how I found Abbie that day, an image I wish I could forget. And to think the headmistress would sell her like that. To a man like him. It just shows she doesn't have an ounce of humanity left in her.

When I say nothing, Mrs. Daley sneers and wanders off. I quickly place the dirty laundry in the washing machine and turn it on, having just finished the last bathroom.

Thankfully she hadn't noticed Abbie sneak out to see Tyson, or that would have ended with some lashes.

Picking up my peasant skirt, I rush back inside and upstairs to the bedrooms. As I reach the top step and spot the clock high on the wall near the ceiling, I sigh. There is no way we'll be done in time. I glance down the hall; there are doors on each side—rooms still waiting to be cleaned—and I shake my head. Alpha Brock is going to kill us if we're late.

Abbie and I have been dreading this day, not because the Lycan King is visiting, but because today is the day we find out if we get to live another or if it will be the day our lives end. Not that I'm expecting anything rosy. Until now, my life has been pretty miserable. I was born a rogue, which is far from the privileged lifestyle of the pack children living outside this orphanage. I'm housed by the very pack that killed my parents, and the Alpha who slaughtered them mercilessly in front of us, making both Abbie and me orphans.

Growing up, I longed to have what my parents told me about packs: unity and family, other kids to play with besides Abbie—whose family lived with us before her parents were killed along with mine. With nowhere left to go, both of us were brought here. Turns out that growing up in a pack is nothing but a disappointment when you're rogue; even more so when you're an orphan.

Unfortunately, because of some law by which all packs strictly live, I was shown mercy, or a twisted version of it. It's against pack law to kill rogue children. They call it mercy, but in reality, it's anything but. My parents were rogues, meaning they had no pack. Some choose a life without a pack, but typically, most rogues have been shunned by their packs. My parents, however, chose that lifestyle. We lived a life on the run, but at least we were free. Despite the freedom, I could always tell my mother had missed being part of a pack by the way she would sometimes speak of the community side of it. That all ended when I was just shy of my tenth birthday. Now I live in the pack orphanage. Abbie and I are the only two rogues that reside here since Taylor was slaughtered years ago, so we know our future looks bleak. Because we were rogues rather than pack orphans, we were very clearly at the bottom of the food chain. Not a day goes by where we aren't reminded of our place.

None of that changes the fact that today is an important day. Today, we will be set free, just not in a sense that most would perceive as freedom. But it is for us. So, we tend to our chores, watching the hours tick by.

I start stripping beds of their linens while Abbie rushes into the room, her fiery red locks swishing past me as she dumps the fresh bed linen on the bottom bunk. There are six bunks in every room, and there are twelve rooms. We have to have each room cleaned and made up before starting on lunch. I haven't eaten lunch, or even breakfast, in years, the same as Abbie. There's just no time; time is something we're already running out of, in more ways than one.

"She almost caught me," Abbie gasps, rushing to dust the chandelier.

I glance at her to see her wipe a stray tear.

"He'll be fine, Abbie" I reassure her, though I have my doubts. Mrs. Daley is a cruel woman, and not even I hold much hope for little Tyson.

"Mrs. Daley.... she told me..." I pause, unsure how to tell her.

Abbie looks over at me. "What is it?" she murmurs.

Swallowing down my fear, I answer, knowing it will break her if Mrs. Daley's claim is true. "The butcher will be there. He's hoping we're auctioned and not killed."

Abbie's lips quiver and she swallows, her eyes darting to the ceiling as she fights back the urge to break down.

"More than my life, Abbie," I whisper.

"I can't promise that; not this time, Ivy. I'd rather death than allow him to get his hands on me again," she tells me, and I blink back tears. "Don't make me break a promise," she whispers, tears in her own eyes.

I nod, knowing how much she suffered. "More than my life," I repeat.

She knows exactly what I mean the second time I speak it. Those words mean more to us than any 'I love you' ever could.

“No, I won't allow it,” Abbie stammers, sucking in a breath. We have a pact, and she knows I will honor it no matter what.

“More than my life,” I tell her with finality.

Abbie wipes a stray tear and nods slowly, her bottom lip quivering as she looks at me.

"More than my life," she whispers finally before turning back to her task. Abbie says nothing more, and I suck in a shaky breath.

I finish stripping the beds and toss the sheets onto the pile on the floor. Abbie starts pulling back the heavy black drapes, cracking the windows open slightly and letting in the fresh air. It's cold this morning; the air brings in a frigid chill, but I know I'll be sweating by the time I'm done and welcoming that chilly draft.

Now that the bed linen is stripped, I start making the beds. The most challenging part is the top bunks. They can be a real bitch to get flat. Mrs. Daley doesn't like wrinkles in the bed linen, and she always checks while twisting her cane between her hands. She'll check each bed, looking for any reason to punish us while Abbie and I hold our breaths, waiting for the verdict; wrinkled sheets are a good enough reason for the cane she carries.

Heaven forbid she doesn't like something, or we do it wrong. I've lost count of the times my skin was welted by that cane or the thin whip wrapped around its handle. I will never forget the sting, and I have more scars on my back than bare skin from the lashings breaking the flesh when she would go too far.

“Pillows,” Abbie’s soft voice says behind me as I finish the last bed. Turning, she tosses them to me and I place them on each bed. We both look around nervously, ensuring no toys are forgotten and nothing is out of place, double checking the dark rugs are straight and the corners lie flat on the floor. We don’t have time to sweep, something I know Mrs. Daley will notice and make us pay for.

We still have five rooms and only two hours left before being called to the town square to learn our fate. We had both decided we would take the lashes for not cleaning; it would be better than showing up late to see the pack’s Alpha.

He is the one who decides what happens to us. This day has hung over our heads for eight long years, like a dark cloud threatening to rain down on us the closer it gets, and I know today it's going to pour down and drown us.

Rushing to the next room, we start all over again—the same routine every day. Once done here, we have to prepare sandwiches for the kids while praying to the Moon Goddess that we finish before 1 p.m. If we're late, I know he'll kill us. It's a great disrespect to the Alpha if you keep him waiting. The Alpha waits for no one, especially a lowly rogue.

By the time we finish, my arms feel like jelly and my legs burn, threatening to give out under me. Abbie clutches her knees, looking around at the sparsely furnished room. The fireplaces in the corner of each room provide the only heating, the windows the only cooling in this dreadful place. We both stare at the dust on them and sigh. The fireplaces create so much ash that settles on everything like yet another layer of dust, making our job even more problematic in the winter. There won't be enough time to tend to that.

At that point, Abbie is breathing hard, and we still have to make the lunches. Her green eyes stare at me knowingly; we're bound to be late. She knows as well as I do... today we will die. Her already pale face turns white as a sheet as she glances at the clock. We have forty-three minutes and over a hundred sandwiches to make for the resident children.

We hear the click of heels on the black, wooden floorboards heading in our direction. Straightening up, we flatten our aprons, fix our hair, and smooth down our long skirts. Just as we place our hands behind our backs, eyes straight ahead, she steps into the room. Her snakeskin stilettos are loud on the floor as she steps in with her round glasses perched on the end of her nose.

Mrs. Daley sneers at us, her lips pulling back over her teeth as she goes to each bed. With her trusty can in hand, she twists it in her fist before slapping it on her palm menacingly. Abbie's eyes dart to me nervously. Her eagle eyes scan the room for anything out of place, looking for any excuse to punish us.

Her hair is pulled into a bun so tight on top of her head that it looks painful. Her high cheekbones and pointed, straight nose make her face crueler and sharper; she reminds me of a crow. She pushes her glasses up on her nose as she looks around.

Mrs. Daley is in her forties but looks more in her late fifties; the lines around her lips and deep wrinkles around her eyes give that impression.

We remain like statues, completely still except for our eyes scanning her every move.

She runs her fingers over the windowsill, and I see Abbie tense. My eyes flit toward it to see it covered in soot. Mrs. Daley clicks her tongue, holding her fingers up to show us. I swallow, my mouth going dry.

“What is this?” she questions, rubbing her fingers together. The ash falls to the floor and her eyes follow it. The kids had trekked dirt through the room, and she doesn't miss that as she glances down.

She purses her lips, which only makes her face wrinkle more.

“Who was supposed to do the windowsills?” she snaps at us, cracking the cane on her palm and lifting her chin.

Abbie raises her hand but says nothing. I can see the fear in her bright green eyes, tears already brimming.

“And the floors?”

I raise mine, my stomach sinking. I knew she wouldn't miss it.

She points to Abbie with her cane. “You! You get three strikes, one for each windowsill.”

Abbie presses her lips together, holding out her hands palm down. Mrs. Daley shakes her head.

“Not good enough. We have important visitors today and I need to show them I don't slack on discipline,” she says with venom in her voice. I watch as Abbie's bottom lip trembles. The back is the worst because every move will sting for days.