

Luna Graced | 13: Chapter 13

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TWO DAYS LATER

ROMAN

Roman rumbled out a louder purr and pulled the soft bundle he was holding closer to him, pressing his nose against the base of a warm neck. *Mmm.*

Soft hair tickled his nose, and he burrowed his face deeper.

His wolf stretched and whined, then curled back up. Both were drifting off when Roman felt an answering purr coming from the warmth he was clinging to.

Neck. Warm skin. Soft hair.

Abby!

He flew out of bed with a fierce growl.

ABIGAIL

Abby scrambled off the bed and whipped her head back and forth, her eyes glowing.

A large alpha crouched in the corner with his own glowing eyes, a warning rumble coming from his chest.

She didn't know where she was or why she was in a room with a half-naked, pissed-off alpha, but she cast her eyes down and bared her neck.

She started to shake, and her wolf let out a low whimper.

"I'm sorry, Alpha. I don't know what's going on," she whispered.

He roared at her and yanked open the door.

LOGAN

Logan was outside the Oracle's house speaking with Rye and the warriors, and enjoying the afternoon sunshine, when the alpha burst out the front door and shifted midair, then ran into the woods, leaving only his shredded boxers behind.

He and Rye took off after him, weaving in and out of the trees as they gave chase, but Roman's huge wolf was just too fast for them.

Then Logan realized where he was going.

The burial grounds.

Of course. Waking up next to the graced luna had no doubt stirred up some long-buried feelings.

He signaled to Rye to pull up, then linked the warriors, telling them to give the alpha some space. He assured the pack the alpha was fine, and that no one was to blame for his fury.

ROMAN

Roman's wolf raced to the burial grounds, enormous paws digging up the earth. His beast's power was surging so fiercely, it took several commands before Roman was able to return to human form.

Panting, he tore a handful of wildflowers from the ground as he stalked, naked and sweating, toward the graves where his mate and pup were buried.

He sank to his knees in front of them and let the flowers fall.

Pounding his fists against his thighs, he lifted his face to the sky and both he and his wolf howled their grief.

It was the first time since Remi's death that he had shared a bed with another female, and the guilt shredded him. He felt like he was betraying Remi and the baby.

What was happening to him?

The Oracle said it was not his place to understand what was happening, not yet at least, but he *had* to. He couldn't go on this way, feeling drawn to protect Abby while also honoring the memory of his murdered mate and pup.

Another howl tore out of him. He pounded the earth until his hands ached. His wolf demanded control, but he fought it. He needed to be in control of himself.

They stayed until the sun began to set.

The link had been quiet the entire time, and he was thankful for the respect of his pack as they allowed him to mourn in peace. But it was time for him to check in.

“Thank you, Logan. My deepest apologies.”

“None necessary, Alpha. On my way.”

Roman nodded to himself and sighed. If there was anything this pack understood, it was grief.

“Abby?”

“Nervous but safe.”

A fresh wave of guilt assailed him, so strong that it rippled through the link. It wasn't Abby's fault he'd crawled into bed with her. He'd been unable to stop himself.

He needed to see the Oracle, but he couldn't go back over to her house right now. He had to check on the pack first.

Logan arrived with clothes and bottled water, and Roman nodded his gratitude as he took them. He drained the bottle and dressed quickly, his stomach churning with hunger.

His mind had finally gone quiet, but guilt had settled deep into his bones.

“I need to train,” he said hoarsely.

“Yes, sir, tomorrow morning. Let's get you some food.”

He clasped his beta's shoulder. “I don't know what's coming, Logan, but we need to be ready for it.”

ABIGAIL

Nothing she'd been trained for made sense any longer.

By wolf law, she should have been abandoned. Shunned. Alone. Yet this pack seemed determined to not only take her in but make her a part of it.

After she'd woken up in the alpha's arms, disoriented and afraid, a brisk but kind old woman with a headful of gray braids had introduced herself as "the Oracle"—much to Abby's shock—and Bell had cooked her a meal.

Then the two women, escorted by several warriors, had given her a brief tour of the pack before taking her to this small house and telling her it was her own.

She'd loved it at first sight. It was bright and cheerful, with a front porch and a beautiful view of the woods and the mountains in the distance.

"I don't deserve this beauty or comfort," she mumbled, putting her hand over her scar. "And I don't understand the ways of your pack. According to wolf law, I'm not even sure I rate basic necessities."

Tears blurred her vision as she met two pairs of sympathetic, glowing eyes.

"You need to settle in," the Oracle said. "We'll help you if you need it, but in the meantime, make this your home."

"Thank you, Oracle."

Bell smiled. "The alpha said you liked tea. I was a healer and still know herbs. I left regular tea in your cupboards for you, but also some of my own blend. It's labeled."

"Really? Thank you. A cup of tea sounds good. Would you both like to join me?"

"I must attend to some business at home." The Oracle gave her a penetrating look. "But I'll be seeing you soon."

Abby bowed. "Of course. Thank you, Oracle."

"I wouldn't mind a cup of tea," Bell chimed in as the Oracle left.

The two of them fell into easy conversation while sipping Bell's herbal blend—which was delicious—and Abby felt like she was finding her first friend here.

When there was a lull in the conversation, Bell set down her cup. “Forgive me if this is too forward, Abby...but I noticed you touching your scar earlier.” She pulled the collar of her shirt aside, revealing a scar of her own.

Abby swallowed her gasp, not wanting to offend.

Bell smiled gently. “I wasn’t rejected like you—though many of the more recent members were—but I’m showing you this so you know there’s no shame in it. Not here.”

“Then how...?”

“A rogue tore off Rye’s mark in the same attack where Luna Remi was killed. The rest is Alpha Roman’s story to tell, not mine.”

The brief silence that followed was broken by a light knock at her door.

Abby stiffened and scented the air.

“I believe it’s your mate,” she said to Bell before getting up to open the door. She greeted Gamma Rye and bowed her head as she moved aside.

“I apologize for coming unannounced,” he said. “I was missing my mate and wanted to check on her.”

“No apology necessary. I understand.”

“How are you enjoying the place, Abby?”

The crescent moon between her breasts started to burn, and she was about to drop her eyes and say “Much more than I deserve,” but then remembered Bell’s words and kept her chin up.

“Very much. I’m grateful to the pack. And to the alpha.”

Bell grinned at her mate. “I invited her over to make tea with me.”

“Moon Goddess help us all! Walk away while you can.”

Abby threw her head back and laughed.

When she returned her gaze to her guests, she noticed Bell rubbing the inside of her wrist with a strange expression on her face. Almost...wistful?

At Abby's curious look, Bell shared a glance with her mate and then gestured to Abby's own wrist. "The alpha bit you so he could link you to the pack. Normally permission is needed, but in this case, it was an emergency."

"Thank you. And would you please thank the alpha for me? I'll do so personally when I get the chance, but...it might not be appropriate at this time."

Rye studied her for a moment before giving a slight nod. "Absolutely."

"May I interest you in a cup of tea, Gamma?"

He cringed. "Goddess, no! That's my cue to leave."

Abby laughed, and again noticed something strange flash across both their faces. Could she be accidentally violating one of their customs?

Despite the kindness of her new friends, she suddenly felt the loss of everything familiar.

Bell gave her a wide smile. "I need to go and feed this man before he fades away. Thank you for sharing your day with me, Abby. And please ring me if you need anything. We're just down the path."

"Thank you both. I appreciate everything you've done for me."

Abby shut the door behind Bell and Rye and turned on the lights in her little home. She was alone.

A sob hit her throat, so she shut the curtains, closed herself off from the link, and let the tears flow.

She wept for her family, wept for the life that had slipped through her fingers. And when she was done, she collapsed into bed, curled up, and gladly let sleep take her.

ROMAN

In his own house, Roman tossed and turned, riding the waves of Abby's emotions. She could shut herself off from the rest of the pack, but she couldn't from him—and he wasn't sure if she realized it.

When she finally settled down, he protected her through the link so she could sleep.

Early the next morning, he threw on a black tank top and cargo pants, which he tucked into his combat boots, and headed to the training grounds.

He was meeting with his elite group of warriors as well as Rye and Logan, and he wanted to make it there before anyone else.

He'd already finished warming up when the rest showed up, and he began by putting everyone through some extensive stretches, a sure sign they were going to get their asses kicked.

He was feeling aggressive this morning, and his men would be feeling it later.

As he focused on the warriors in front of him, he sensed Abby stirring. Had she reopened the pack link, or was he the only one who could feel her? He shook his head and waved his gamma over.

Rye took the group through the first set of maneuvers, yelling at them to change stances and attack. And as the sun rose higher in the sky, the warriors started discarding their sweat-soaked shirts.

Rye called for a water break, and while the group was catching their breath, Roman felt a sudden warmth spread across his chest. It took a few warriors giving him curious looks for him to realize he was purring.

A soft sigh came through the link, and everything else faded away. A smile crept across his face as he tilted it to the sun.

Water. Skin. Warm.

Sigh...

Leg. Smooth. Soap. Humming. Shower. Abby. Naked. Bubbles. SHOWER. ABBY. SHOWER. ABBY.

Emotion tore through him, almost sending him staggering, and his eyes snapped open.

Even if her link wasn't open to the pack, his was, and at a minimum, the men in front of him—staring at him, mouths agape—were aware of what he was feeling.

A growl ripped from his chest as both his wolf and his anger surged, and his men immediately bowed their heads.

He snapped the link shut and stormed off the training grounds.