

Luna Graced | 16: Chapter 16

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ABIGAIL

By the time they got to the Oracle's house, Abby had managed to prepare herself for Roman's wrath. At least she thought she had until she saw him storming out the front door.

The Oracle followed behind. "Roman," the old woman said in soothing tones. "The young luna is not understanding."

"I'M not understanding!" he roared at the top of his lungs, his huge hands clenched into fists.

Abby shuddered at the depth of his rage. And there was more to it, a deep despair she could sense but not interpret. She only knew she was the cause.

Taking several deep breaths, she focused on her heartbeat. She felt warmth radiating inside her, and Logan's expression showed her that he could feel it too.

She shared a look with him, grateful that he seemed as confused as she was by their alpha's wide-swinging emotions.

Roman stepped forward and grasped her arm. "You are *not* leaving this pack," he snarled, then surprised her by pulling her into an embrace.

"I'm sorry, Abigail," he rasped against her ear. "I'm struggling, and I'm taking it out on you."

ROMAN

His wolf's purr buzzed through him, and the beast's desire to comfort Abby made Roman feel even more like a complete asshole. Why could his wolf find a way to accept these feelings when he couldn't?

He turned Abby in his arms until she was forced to look up at him. "You're not going anywhere. I can't protect you if you leave."

“But I make you upset by being here. I can’t even hum in the shower because it makes you so mad.”

He could feel her trembling, and guilt slapped at him again. He was making a mess of this. He timed his breathing to hers, waiting until he sensed her calming.

“You’re not to blame, Abby. I’m trying to balance some things, and I’m unsure myself why my reactions to you are so...”

He fought and failed to find the right words. “*Strong*. I’ve come to the Oracle for some guidance. Will you talk to her with me?”

ABIGAIL

“Yes, Alpha.”

It was the only reply she could make. He was her alpha, and she would obey him even if he didn’t want her to belong to him.

Belong. To Roman Luko.

She remembered them in bed together, and a rush of emotion she didn’t recognize coursed through her. Waking up with him curled around her had set her mind spinning...had brought her a solace she didn’t deserve.

She began to struggle against his embrace, not sure why she wanted to fight him. Certain she wouldn’t be able to.

“Abby, look at me, please.” She lifted her eyes, and his were liquid gold in a sea of black.

Slowly, he drew her close to him again.

“I’m sorry, and I will try not to lash out at you again.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

With a sigh, she wrapped her arms around his waist and pressed her cheek against his chest. A warmth enveloped them, and the link opened.

THE ORACLE

The Oracle felt the link open, felt the rush of warmth. The pack calmed as the alpha and the young luna finally relaxed.

She stepped closer to Logan, who was watching Roman and Abigail closely. "He just lost his first battle."

The beta snorted but offered no challenge. He understood what she meant. At least he was starting to.

"And the next?"

"Heart."

Watching as the couple separated, she caught a glimpse of the golden blanket the Moon Goddess had wrapped around them, a sign of blessings to come, of comfort and peace. If only Roman would accept it.

Roman murmured something to Abby, who nodded after a moment, and the two of them went inside the house while Logan took a position by the door.

The Oracle didn't follow at once. Instead, she looked up at the sky and opened herself to the Moon Goddess and any visions or help she saw fit to provide.

She could feel Abigail's soul starting to weaken.

And the more Roman raged at her and forced her to defend herself against him, the more that weakness would grow, making it easier for Carson to break through the cracked link.

But Roman had built a wall around himself, a wall that was keeping Abby out. Neither of them had figured that out yet, but they would have to, and soon.

"Help me, Moon Goddess," she pleaded. "Show me how to help them both."

But when no answer came, the Oracle went back into the house.

ABIGAIL

Abby was sitting next to Roman on the Oracle's couch, only a few inches between them, when the old woman came back in, carrying a heavy, leather-bound book.

She remained standing and studied them both with narrowed eyes.

“Stop fighting what you know is inevitable, Roman,” the Oracle snapped.
“She’s weakening.”

Abby was confused. “What do you mean?”

But the Oracle continued to glare at the alpha. “Roman, do you understand me?”

“No!” he bit out.

“Stop fighting!” The Oracle slammed the heavy book on the coffee table, and Abby jumped.

Roman growled at the Oracle and flashed his eyes, and the old woman growled back and flashed hers. Abby just looked from one to the other, her eyes wide and her lips slightly parted.

The Oracle turned to her. “Abigail, do you feel that warmth that you have?”

“Yes, Oracle.”

“Do you feel your power?”

Abby paused. “Yes, Oracle.”

“You recognize your speed and your agility?”

“Yes, Oracle.”

“You are a graced luna. Those are just some of your gifts.”

ROMAN

Roman watched the color drain from Abby’s face as the information registered.

The Oracle’s voice turned somber. “How much do you know about graced lunas, Abigail?”

A long pause. Then Abby whispered hoarsely, “A graced luna will die without her mate.”

Roman shot to his feet. "What?" his voice boomed out.

The Oracle gave a curt nod. "It's true. And the more you fight, the faster she will weaken. Stop fighting, Roman, and accept."

"No!" Roman started to pace, his fists clenching and releasing. Waves of power surrounded him, strengthened by his seething emotions. "I do not accept this!"

Abby just sat stiffly on the couch. "Carson didn't just sentence me to a life of hell," she said, strangely wooden. "He sentenced me to death. He rejected me. I have no mate."

Without looking at him, she got to her feet. "You..." Her voice wavered, and she cleared her throat. "You don't want a dying wolf in your territory, Alpha. It will be hard on the pack. I need to leave, and I need to see my parents."

Roman placed himself between her and the door, although she hadn't taken a step toward it. He reached for her but then held himself back. *Stop fighting*, the Oracle said, but how could he?

He turned to the Oracle. "Please! How do we stop this?"

"You must fight your next battle."

He threw up his hands in frustration. "When? *Who?*"

"Now. You must battle your own heart."

He growled. "You're testing my patience, old woman."

"And *you're* not listening, Roman. Stop fighting it! The Moon Goddess is ~asking~ you to stop fighting it."

"*Fight WHAT?*" He roared in her face as his teeth and nails elongated.

His heavy burst of alpha power brought Abby to her knees, but the Oracle didn't even bow her head. Instead, she stared him down with those odd violet eyes. "The gift she is trying to give you both."

He stumbled, and Abby grabbed her chest.

Letting out another burst of alpha power, he stormed out of the house and shifted, leaving shredded clothes everywhere.

ABIGAIL

After Roman left, the Oracle offered her no more insight, just called Bell and Rye to escort her home.

Abby could hardly walk; she was stunned, confused, and rocked to the core that she was dying.

Yes, her soul was quiet and very tired, but she hadn't thought that was alarming until now.

"I'm dying..." she whispered to herself, and she felt her soul curl up.

Her wolf howled, and the alpha's deep, mournful answering howl reverberated across the territory. Rye and Bell both lowered their heads, and Abby could tell Bell was holding back tears.

Through the pack link, Abby could feel Roman vacillate between anger, sorrow, loss, and confusion. He mourned, and the pack mourned with him.

The walk the rest of the way down the path was eerily silent.

Rye and Bell delivered her to her little house, and despite it being the middle of the day, Abby went straight to her bed, where she burrowed under the blankets and sobbed.

Sobbed for the life that had been stolen from her. Sobbed for being given the ultimate punishment when she'd done nothing wrong.

LOGAN

Logan followed his raging alpha all the way to the burial grounds, then stayed hidden in the trees at the edge to keep watch and wait. His thoughts were heavy, and he wanted to be home with his mate.

But he knew his alpha needed him.

Roman shifted and sank to his knees in front of his dead mate's grave, and his sorrow and emptiness flooded the link and spread through the entire pack.

Logan almost fell to his own knees at the force of it.

ROMAN

The grass was soft against his bare skin, but he barely noticed as he ached for the loss of his mate and his pup. Ached for the life he'd lost when they died.

He howled into the wind, letting it carry his sorrow across the land. He raised his fists to the Moon Goddess for confusing him, for letting Abby die a slow death. He begged for help to understand what the gift was.

Then, falling prostrate, he clutched the grass and screamed into Mother Earth, asking anyone for help that would listen.

When the sun finally dipped below the trees, sending long shadows across his naked form, he curled up on the grass from exhaustion and took refuge in the darkness of sleep.

LOGAN

When Roman finally quieted, Logan linked Rye and requested a group of warriors to guard the alpha during the night, with orders to alert him immediately if Roman moved.

Then he ran home to Mara and held her close, grateful he still had her.

ROMAN

Roman was deep in that darkness, standing alone, when a light came toward him. He reached out for the light and touched his dead mate.

"Remi?"

"Roman," she said gently. "You must stop fighting."

"I've missed you, mate."

"It's time for you to open your heart."

He shook his head. "My heart died when you and our pup did."

"She's dying, Roman. She needs her mate to survive."

“Her mate rejected her!”

“No, Roman. Her mate has not yet accepted her. YOU must accept her.”

“I can’t!”

“You can if you want her to live.”

“I can’t replace you.”

“And you won’t. I will always be with you. Open your eyes and your heart. It’s time. Save Abby, and she will save you.”

He clutched her upper arms. “I love you, Remi!”

“And I, you, so much that I want you to take the gift the Moon Goddess is giving you.”

He felt her lips on his, then he woke up startled, with fistfuls of grass in his hands.

He was alone.