

Luna Graced | 23: Chapter 23

23: Chapter 23

ROMAN

“Would you like to take a drive with me and see some of the territory?” Roman asked Abby when the elite group finished eating breakfast.

Abby smiled at him from her spot at the other end of the long table. *“I would. Thank you, Alpha.”*

They held eye contact for a few moments, and he rumbled quietly, happy she wanted to spend time with him.

“Breakfast was good,” he said aloud. “Thank you, everyone.”

While Abby helped with the cleaning up—after promising not to overexert herself—Roman asked Bell to step outside with him.

“What can I do for you, Alpha?”

“I’d like to take Abby on a picnic this afternoon. Would you mind packing lunch for the two of us?”

“It would be my pleasure.” She bowed her head and pressed her lips together, and he could tell she was trying to suppress her excitement.

“Thank you. I’ll come around in a couple of hours.” He shook his head and chuckled. “And Bell? I can hear you giggling through the link.”

“Sorry, Alpha.” She grinned and scooted back to the kitchen.

ABIGAIL

The rest of the morning progressed quickly. Abby helped in the pack house, organizing and cleaning. And although she’d been trained as luna for a different pack, she was still able to use her skills to make some positive changes.

At first, she was unsure how her suggestions would be received by long-term members of the pack, but everyone seemed to gravitate toward her like she'd always been there.

She was outside assigning chores to a group of teen wolves when Roman rolled up in his lifted truck. He cut the engine and jumped out.

"Alpha." Abby bowed her head, and the teens lined up, doing the same.

"Is everything all right here?" Roman glanced at the juvenile wolves with their heads bowed. "They give you some trouble?"

"Oh no, Alpha. Everything's fine, thank you. I'm just going over assigned chores. There needs to be a little more pride in their home, that's all." She winked at him.

The teens, who were each holding a bag and gloves, shuffled their feet.

"Get to it," Roman barked, and they all scrambled.

"Alpha!" Abby put her hands on her hips. "That wasn't necessary."

"It was. You couldn't hear what the little shits were thinking." He grinned at her as she started laughing. "Are you ready for that ride, mate?"

"Yes, Alpha. I just need to freshen up."

ROMAN

After he escorted Abby to the pack house restroom, Roman noticed several groups bustling around.

A well-run pack house was a benefit to any pack, and he prided himself on having one, but there'd definitely been some changes since the last time he was in here. Positive ones.

Could Abby be behind them? Like with the hot breakfast? He flushed with pride at how well, and how quickly, his mate was integrating into the pack.

He went back outside and saw Bell put a basket in the bed of his truck. She grinned and put a finger over her lips, promising to keep his secret.

Abby came out the door a few minutes later. "I'm ready!"

He lifted her into the truck and hopped in after her. And when he turned on the ignition, the roar of the engine rattled the windows of the house. Several small pups peeked out, and Abby waved at them.

He smiled as the little ones waved back, but when he lifted his own hand, they squealed and ducked down.

“You scared them,” Abby scolded, but her smile told him she was teasing.

ABIGAIL

Abby looked out the passenger side window at their warrior escort. They were in wolf form and keeping to the trees on the side of the road.

“You’ve been productive.”

She turned to look at Roman. “I’m trying. We have the pantry straightened out and a supply spreadsheet going now.”

“Outstanding, thank you. You’re already settling into your role as luna. Anyone give you trouble?” He took her hand and pulled her gently toward him.

She scooted across the bench seat and snuggled into his side. “You’re welcome, and no. Everyone’s been so welcoming.” She felt the vibrations from his wolf’s purr.

Rolling hills began to peek through the trees as Roman decreased their speed.

“This is the east entrance to the pack lands,” he said, driving the truck through a heavily guarded gate. Most of the guards were in human form, but there were a few wolves lying in the grass.

“It borders with neutral territory for now, although ownership of it has been coming up more and more in talks lately. The guards posted here are mainly watching for nomads, rogues, and scouts from other packs.”

“Have you thought of training the women to fight?” It hadn’t escaped her notice that none of the other women trained with the warriors.

“No, absolutely not.”

“May I ask why?”

“Their job is to take care of the pack house, food, the pups... Let the men worry about the fighting.”

Abby’s jaw dropped. “So, the little ladies hold the fort down, barefoot and pregnant, while the menfolk do what they need to do?” She raised her eyebrows and waited for him to answer.

He grunted. “Yes, exactly.”

“Roman!” She slid back across the seat so she could get a better look at him—and make room in case she needed to bite him. “Are you serious?”

ROMAN

Roman took one look at Abby’s face and realized he may have made a mistake.

Yeah...he probably shouldn’t have listened to his wolf when it nudged him to agree, but he’d been distracted by images of Abby pregnant with his pup.

He saw the small clearing he wanted to take her to and rolled to a stop, and their warrior escort immediately spread out to give them some privacy.

He was glad, especially since he was pretty sure he was going to get an earful.

“Abby...” He turned to her. “I’d like to have lunch and maybe discuss this a little further. I didn’t mean it like that.”

“I’d love to have lunch and *discuss* this with you too.” She flashed a wolfy grin.

He jumped out of the truck and grabbed the basket and a blanket from the back, then came around to her side and offered her his free hand.

She took it and jumped out, and they continued to hold hands until he found a spot for them in the shade and spread out the blanket.

Roman settled the basket between them as they both sat. “I asked Bell to pack us lunch.”

Abby lifted her chin and met his gaze. “Because it’s what the *women* do.”

“Okay.” He sighed and sat back. “Let me have it.”

“Roman! How could you expect the women to defend themselves without any skills? What if you and the guard are needed all the way out here on the eastern border? What happens then?”

“I can protect my pack,” he growled. But memories of the rogue attack that killed his mate—and decimated his pack—flashed through his head. His throat tightened and he swallowed hard.

She’d touched a nerve. But she also had a point.

She shook her head. “I didn’t say you couldn’t protect the pack. I wanted to know how the women would defend themselves if you were spread out.”

“Well, what do you suggest?”

“Train them, starting at age eight, both males and females. I’m not suggesting everyone be trained, just the ones who are capable.”

“Not everyone has the warrior blood you carry.” He held her fiery gaze.

“But everyone has a warrior *heart*, especially when it comes to defending their pack.”

His eyes were glowing and his wolf started to purr. He liked her response.

“Noted. I’ll talk with Logan and Rye. I assume you would be interested in training them?”

“No, Alpha,” she made a cute huffing sound. “I’ll be too busy making pancakes and warm syrup.”

Growling, Roman moved the basket out of the way. “*Smartass*. Come here.”

Abby laughed and leaned toward him, and his purr got louder as she got closer. He stuck his face in her neck and inhaled.

“You smell good, mate.”

ABIGAIL

Roman nudged Abby onto her back, and she looped her arms around his neck, nuzzling him in return.

“Thank you,” she murmured. “You smell good too.” She liked the way his cologne mixed with his own scent.

He kissed her gently, removing her ponytail holder and running his hand through her hair, and they shared a quiet moment in the shade, enjoying each other’s company between soul-searing kisses.

After a while, Roman pulled away and took a sandwich out of the basket. But instead of biting into it, he held it out for Abby to take. A simple act, but a significant one. It showed he saw her as his luna.

Her heart swelled. How was it possible they were at odds just a short time ago, and now he was offering her the greatest respect an alpha could give?

She, in turn, fed him from her sandwich, and he purred, happy with the attention she was giving him.

They stayed on that blanket, wrapped up in each other, until the sun started to lower.

Roman nipped her neck, purring as she exposed it to him. “How are you feeling?” He rubbed his nose along her jaw.

Her wolf purred, and she stretched. “I’m feeling very well, thank you.”

“I’d like permission to mark you,” he rumbled in her ear, giving her goosebumps.

She closed her eyes at the complicated feelings washing over her. She’d been marked before, and Carson had betrayed her. He’d essentially sentenced her to death.

Roman had saved her.

But what if something went wrong again? What if he decided he didn’t want her as his mate, his luna, his second chance?

If she refused him, she’d die. But what would happen if she accepted him and he rejected her the way Carson had?

That would kill her.