

Luna Graced | 8: Chapter 8

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ROMAN

“Abigail,” Roman said gently, trying to wake the sleeping woman next to him. He watched as she sighed and stretched.

“I apologize, Alpha Luko. I haven’t been sleeping well.” She bared her neck to him.

He rumbled in appreciation of her respect. “I understand. I’m glad you got a little rest. We’re stopping for food, and I need to stretch. And please, call me Alpha Roman.”

“Yes, Alpha, thank you.” She kept her head down.

Roman eyed her. “Do you prefer Abigail or Abby?”

“Either is fine, Alpha.”

“You can look at me, Abby. I know when I’m being challenged and when it’s just friendly eye contact.” His chest swelled and his wolf chuffed in approval. “It’s the difference between a real alpha and a pup.”

She lifted her head and offered him a smile, but it didn’t reach her eyes. “Thank you, sir.”

As Logan pulled into a parking lot, Roman noticed that Abby glanced nervously out the window.

“Neutral territory,” Roman said. “We stop here occasionally on our travels. It’s quiet.”

They parked, and his crew started to file out of the other SUVs.

They were normally a gregarious group, but not today. A number of them had suffered their own losses and rejections, so out of respect for hers, they were being quiet, observing her mourning.

ABIGAIL

“Is it appropriate to introduce myself?” Abby asked, staring out the window at the serious-looking men. “I’d like to thank them for protecting me.”

“I’ll take care of that in a moment. Wait here.” Alpha Roman slid out of the back seat and walked around to her side.

When her door opened, she was surprised to see the Luko warriors had formed a line outside the SUV.

A large hand reached for her, and she grasped it; it was warm, and she could feel the rumble from Alpha Roman’s wolf through their touch.

“I apologize in advance for the formality,” he murmured. “There’s a lot you still don’t know, and it’s causing me to adhere to protocol more than I normally do. Trust me, I’ll explain everything later.”

He introduced her to Beta Logan first, who offered his hand and forearm—a sign of respect rarely shown to females.

She was puzzled but took it in stride, and as they continued down the line, she took care to thank each man by name and look him briefly in the eye.

ROMAN

Roman was impressed with her manners. She showed respect to all of his men, mated or not, by using universal signs until she learned the individual pack rules.

After the introductions, he ushered everyone into the restaurant, where he requested a private table. The manager eyed him, then assigned the entire group to a separate dining area.

The man obviously recognized him, which meant the rest of the neutral pack knew he was in their territory.

“Stopping for a meal only,” he reassured the skittish man. “Just passing through.”

“Thank you, Alpha Luko. It’s a pleasure to have you here.” The man glanced at Abigail, and his eyes widened when he saw her scar.

Roman rumbled a warning, then projected a burst of alpha power, and the man bared his neck with a bow.

“My apologies, Alpha.” He sidled away, eyes on the floor.

“Send someone immediately,” Roman snapped at him, and the man jumped and ran off.

Some pack members went to use the facilities, and after asking Logan to escort Abby to a private restroom, Roman went with them. He wanted to change into fresh clothes.

ABIGAIL

Abby shut the bathroom door behind her and let out a breath and sob.

She could feel Carson trying to break through the wall to communicate, but she didn't understand how that was possible. Their link should've been broken.

A dull ache was starting at the base of her skull from having to force the wall back.

She was washing her hands when the first hard wave hit her. Gasping, she opened the door, then stumbled and grabbed the wall as an even harder wave hit.

Logan started toward her. “Abigail, are you okay?”

“*Carson*,” she gasped as his roar filled her head. Her hands flew to her ears, and she fell to her knees.

Then Alpha Roman was there, on his knees in front of her, his hands covering hers. “Close it, Abby...you have to close it. Find your warrior.”

She dug deep, then let out a primal scream mixed with a howling growl from her wolf.

The noise in her head stopped abruptly.

LOGAN

Logan's knees buckled before he managed to right himself.

What the...? Everyone in the restaurant, including their warriors, must have felt that.

“Breathe,” Roman said in his commanding alpha voice, and Logan looked down. The alpha was staring intently at Abigail’s chest, which suddenly started to rise and fall.

Her skin was flushed, and she was squeezing her eyes shut, her hands still over her ears. It was a few moments before she removed them, and when she did, she burst out into a soul-crushing sob.

Roman scooped her up. “We need to get on the road! Get the food. I’ll drive Abigail.” Then he whisked her outside.

One of the warriors came out of the men’s room, wiping his hands. “Moon Goddess! What on Mother Earth was *that?*”

“That,” Logan snapped, “was a very powerful wolf unaware of her power.”

ABIGAIL

Abby was still sobbing as Alpha Roman helped her into the passenger seat of their SUV, her mind whirling with what had just happened.

He got into the driver’s side and pulled out, telling her the caravan would be right behind them.

Again and again, she blocked Carson’s attempts to intrude into her mind and establish their link. Over and over, she shored up that wall between them.

But again and again, the force of his will came back, battering at her until she fell into an exhausted sleep.

“Abby.”

She sat up and blinked, her wolf growling at being startled awake. It was dark, and for a moment she didn’t know where she was, but when her memories flooded back to her, she let out a strangled sob.

It hadn’t been a nightmare.

She heard Roman’s wolf rumble, trying to comfort her.

“My apologies, Alpha Roman.” She ducked her head.

“It’s okay, I startled you.” He glanced over and met her eyes. “Hungry?”

“No, sir.”

“How’s your head?”

“Light headache.” She sighed. “I don’t understand—”

“I know you’re not hungry, but you need to refuel that energy you expelled earlier.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

He frowned at her response. “I thought it was best not to stop again, so we drove through most of the night. More space between the two of you might help.”

“The bond is severed. This shouldn’t happen.”

“I have a theory, but I need to talk to someone first. But I *can* tell you that you’re a very special wolf, Abby. And Carson is a very powerful one. The two of you combined would have been a new type of leadership.

“It would appear that your bond goes deeper than soulmates, and that it hasn’t been completely severed. Maybe because your rejection of each other goes against the very fate the Moon Goddess had in store for you.”

Abby shook her head, confused. “But I no longer wear his mark.”

“His wolf glimpsed what the Moon Goddess wanted him to see. What his future would have been, and what he lost. His wolf won’t want to let that go.”

He glanced over at her again. “We’re going to stop at a hotel for just a few hours. We’ll shower and change and rest a little. My warriors need to run and hunt.”

“Yes, Alpha.”

“I’m sorry that this happened, Abby.”

“Thank you, Alpha, but I believe I’m being punished for not being mate-worthy.” She hung her head as the crescent burned on her chest.

At the low sound of his warning growl, she looked up. He was watching her, and for the first time, she noticed how dark his eyes were. Although right now they were lit with a golden glow.

His lip curled, and it was easy to see his wolf's power, even in his human form. A shiver ran up her spine.

"Never say that," he growled before returning his eyes to the road. "*You* are not the one at fault, and I won't have you tearing yourself down for someone else's mistakes. That foolish pup had no idea the havoc he was wreaking."

She bowed again, the fierce tone in his voice sending another shiver tickling through her. But she was far from cold; a heat had risen inside her at his words.

This man and his wolf would protect her in all the ways an alpha should protect his pack.

But what would that mean for her if she couldn't break free of her old mate and the life they were meant to share?

ROMAN

"Sir, my knees almost gave way," Logan said, keeping his voice low. "I've never experienced anything like that from a female."

Roman and Logan were in an adjoining suite to Abigail's, so they'd waited until she left their room to take a shower before discussing their concerns.

"Not even the Oracle is sure what to expect from her," Roman replied, "though she did say Abigail probably has no idea what she's capable of." He frowned. "We have to get her to eat—she needs to fuel up, then get her wolf out..."

"And I want to go for a run."

He did a full body stretch—his muscles were aching from spending so many hours cooped up in the car—then cracked his neck and rolled his shoulders.

"We'll be much safer in pack territory," Logan pointed out.

"True. So we'll make it top priority as soon as we hit the territory line. She and I can run with a group of warriors. Call Gamma Rye and have him alert the territory guards."

“Yes, Alpha.”

As Logan stepped away to make the call, Roman heard Abby moan as she got under the hot water. His chest rumbled.

Trying to shut out her sounds, he linked the first group of warriors that were out on a run, telling them to be careful to stay inside the boundaries of the neutral territory.

His wolf snarled, aware of the powerful female and not happy about ignoring her, but Roman pushed back.

“I’m getting in the shower,” he called out to Logan. “Keep an ear out for the warrior group. And if Abigail gets another headache, come get me.”