

The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 61

We ran back to the hotel, giggling hand in hand. When we got to the door, I searched my pockets for the key card. Mark grabbed me and turned me around, pressing me against the door. I threw my hands around his neck and fell into a deep kiss with him. His hands started in my hair, but they quickly lowered down my body.

He started kissing my neck, and I gasped from the pleasure. This fueled his movements, and he continued attacking me with kisses.

I heard a door nearby, and my heart started racing. “Mark,” I whispered. “Let’s go inside where we have more privacy.”

“I don’t care who sees,” Mark whispered against my neck.

My core was heating up from the anticipation. I tried to focus as I finished searching for the key card. My fingers brushed against it, and I quickly pulled it out of my pocket. I turned around and started to unlock the door.

Mark didn’t let go of me as I fumbled with the door. He pressed himself against me, and I could feel his hardness against my butt. The door finally opened, and I practically fell into the room. Mark’s hands around me are the only reason I didn’t completely fall. We stumbled into the room, and Mark shut the door behind us.

I flipped back around, and Mark was on me in an instant. I wrapped my arms around his neck, and he picked me up by the back of the thighs. I wrapped my legs around his waist, and he carried me over to the bed. He dropped me on the bed, and then he pulled his shirt over his head.

I found myself admiring his torso, but it wasn’t long before Mark was on top of me again. We found each other’s mouths again, and every touch of his sent sparks through my body. His fingers found the hem of the shirt, and he pulled my shirt over my head, separating our lips for just a moment.

The moments became a blur as his kisses started moving down my body. Every touch was magical and enticing, and I knew there was no coming back from this. His hands roamed every inch of my body, eliciting small moans, which only fueled him to do more. He fondled my breasts, first with his hands and then his mouth.

I closed my eyes and arched my back, wanting so much more. I couldn't control myself for much longer.

"Mark," I whispered. "I need you."

Mark paused, making me open my eyes to see what he was doing. He was staring at me with a love-struck smile.

"Are you sure?" he asked me.

I nodded my head. "Positive."

"I love you," he whispered, leaning forward to kiss me again.

"I love you, too," I whispered back when we separated from the kiss.

His eyes darkened, and he sat back. He started undoing his belt and taking off his pants. I gulped at the sight in front of me, but I didn't have much time to admire it. He quickly moved, undressing me the rest of the way. He hovered on top of me and kissed me yet again.

"Ready?" he asked.

I nodded, unable to say anything else. I was almost shaking in anticipation, and I needed him more than I could admit. He slowly moved forward, slowly filling me up. Being so close to him sent eruptions through every cell in my body, and I had no idea something could feel so amazing. I felt complete being so close to him, and I never wanted to stop.

Mark quickened his pace, and I could feel the heat building into my core. I dug my nails into his back, needing to hold onto something to stop myself from floating away. With a final kiss from Mark, an explosion went off in my body, and I completely melted into everything.

With a few more movements, Mark let out a groan and stopped moving. He lay on top of me, and both of our chests were heaving as we tried to catch our breaths. After a moment, Mark lifted himself up and looked at me with a soft smile. He brushed my hair out of my face and gave me a peck.

"Are you okay?" he asked.

I nodded slowly. "I'm wonderful. You're wonderful."

Mark rolled off me and turned to his side, so he was looking at me. "That was more incredible than I had even imagined."

I rolled to my side, feeling the exhaustion taking over me. "I don't know why I was so hesitant before."

Mark chuckled and kissed my forehead. "It was worth the wait. You've been worth the wait."

I shifted so I was closer to Mark and wrapped my arm around his side. I could feel myself growing sad, thinking of the possibility of losing him in the upcoming fight. Tonight had been so amazing, and I couldn't wait to start my life with him without the looming danger lurking around the corner.

"What are you thinking about?" He cupped my cheek and stroked my face with his thumb.

"I'm thinking about what life with you will be like," I said. There was a heavy feeling in my chest, and I wanted it to go away.

"Then why do you look so sad?"

I nuzzled closer to Mark and rested my face against his chest. He was still sweaty, but I didn't care. "Because I'm scared we won't get that far." My voice was barely audible, but I knew Mark heard me.

Mark wrapped his arms around me and pulled me tightly against his body. "Tell me about the life we are going to have."

"Well, I want to get to know your pack much better for one, especially if I'm going to help you run things," I said.

Mark nuzzled his face into the top of my head. "You are going to make a wonderful Luna. Everyone will love you. I know Scythe and Rie already think you're great."

I looked up at him with a small grin. "And what do you think about me?"

Mark hummed for a moment. "You're okay, I guess."

I smacked his chest, laughing. "Mark!"

He laughed back. "You are my new life, Adira. I want to be the best man I can be for you. I want to be around you all of the time, and when you're not around me, I'm thinking about you. I'm thinking about your smile and laughter. I think about how caring you are and how I'm so lucky to have been mated with you."

I grew quiet in response. I had just been teasing Mark earlier, but hearing him say all of those wonderful things was almost too much. I could feel the tears threatening my eyes. "Mark, I'm lucky to have found you. You have been so patient and understanding with me, even when I'm not sure I deserved it. I can't imagine my life without you in it. That both terrifies and excites me."

Mark tilted my chin up so I was looking directly in his eyes. "Don't be scared. I'm not going anywhere."

Before I could argue, he kissed me again, and things quickly grew heated. I could feel him harden against my leg, and I knew we were about to go for round two. The tiredness from before quickly disappeared, and the need to be close to him again grew in my core. I knew right then that the rest of the night was going to be a blur of love and pleasure.

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Mark was the first to fall asleep between the two of us. My body was exhausted from the hours we had spent together talking and moving as one. However, when I closed my eyes, my brain could not relax. I watched Mark sleeping, his chest rising and falling slowly. He looked so peaceful like that. I leaned forward and kissed his forehead before rolling out of bed.

I pulled on my pajamas and then a robe for warmth. I tiptoed out of the room, not wanting to wake Mark. I closed the door as softly as I could behind me. Then I moved to the railing in front of the hotel door. I could see the courtyard of the hotel and the night sky from the walkway.

Leaning against the railing, I took a deep breath, trying to calm my mind. I looked up and saw the moon hovering high in the sky, and the light shining down on me gave me a burst of energy. In less than twenty-four hours, the fight would be over, one way or another. I went through the plan over and over again, but it didn't help ease my mind. There were too many unknown factors involved.

A big part of it would involve contacting Theron successfully and him choosing to show up. If he decided to ignore my challenge, who knows how long all of

this would go on. I needed this to be over tomorrow. I needed to know my life could start without Theron threatening my life and the people around me. I needed a moment to breathe and enjoy this new found happiness. Things had to go perfectly tomorrow.

But I was scared I wouldn't be enough.

I was scared I would make a mistake, and it would cost someone their life.

I was scared I wouldn't get my happily ever after.

I looked back to the moon. It looked almost like a full moon with just a small sliver missing from it. It looked so bright and so full. I remembered my mother talking to me about the moon goddess, and how she watched over all of the werewolves and protected them. The moon goddess was supposed to be a bringing of good and love. As a child, I loved hearing all of the stories. It was nice to believe that there was someone watching over me.

However, when my own family rejected me and sent me off on my own, I had found myself in a very dark place. I felt like I was the only one who was looking out for me, and I stopped believing in the stories my mother had told me.

As I stood there, staring up at the moon, I found myself asking for protection for me and all of my friends. I asked the moon goddess to look out for all of us and give me the chance to finally have a happy life and a family.

The door behind me opened, and Mark's scent instantly hit my nose. I wasn't surprised when he wrapped his arms around me. He rested his chin on my shoulder.

"What are you doing out here?" he asked.

"I couldn't sleep."

"It's late, and it's cold out here. Why don't you come back to bed?" Mark brushed his nose against my neck.

"The moon is beautiful tonight." I wasn't ready to go to bed quite yet.

"It really is," Mark said.

He didn't say anything else, and I think he knew I wasn't ready to go to bed quite yet. Instead, he stood there with me, keeping my body warm, and keeping me company. I felt more confident with him next to me. I felt like together the two of us could do anything.

I could feel my mind starting to relax, and my body's exhaustion finally was catching up to me. I let go of the railing and grabbed Mark's arms. I leaned back into him, taking in his magnificent scent.

"Okay, let's go to bed," I suggested.

"Okay." Mark pressed a soft kiss against my neck, giving me butterflies.

He let go of me, keeping a hold on just my hand. He led me back to the room and put me to bed. He cuddled up behind me and stroked my hair until I fell asleep.

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Today was the day, and I woke up feeling anxious and nervous. There were only a few hours before we had to leave to the location we had decided on for the fight. When I turned to see if Mark was awake, my heart froze when I saw he wasn't in bed. I immediately shot up and looked around.

A sense of relief washed over me when I found a note from Mark, letting me know he had gone down to breakfast with the rest of the pack, and he didn't want to wake me because he knew I needed the sleep. Urgency washed over me, and I rushed to get ready for the day. I thought about skipping my shower, but I knew I would feel much better after a hot shower, especially because of the activities of the previous night.

The shower relaxed my muscles, and I ended up staying in there longer than I had anticipated. Once I was out, I got dressed quickly and left the room to find Mark. I wandered out of the hotel room and went to the breakfast area. I peaked in and saw Mark at a table with Scythe, Rie, and the other three members from Mark's pack. I couldn't remember all of their names from the day before.

Two of them were men, and one I had briefly run into at Mark's pack house the very first time I was there. The other one was a tall woman with dark hair pulled back into a tight ponytail. The table was completely full, so I hesitated with approaching. I didn't want to interrupt their conversations and intrude.

I hovered by the door, wondering if I should just go back to the room and wait for Mark. Before I could decide, Mark turned his head, making direct eye contact with me. He must have smelled me and realized I was standing there. He quickly got up and moved towards me. He immediately pulled me into a kiss, but I felt embarrassed kissing him in front of all of his pack members.

"You're blushing," Mark teased as he pulled away.

I glanced over at the table. "They are all looking at us."

Mark shrugged. "So what?"

I chewed on the inside of my cheek. "I don't know. It's kind of embarrassing. I don't want them to think poorly of me."

"They'll love you because I love you," Mark said. He squeezed my hand and started pulling me towards the table. "Come on. You should eat. We have a long day ahead of us."

When we got to the table, I stood awkwardly, since there weren't any chairs. One of the guys I didn't know stood up and offered a chair to me, and the rest of them followed. Mark and Rie stayed at the table, but I got up to grab some food. Scythe followed me over to the breakfast line.

"How are you doing?" Scythe asked. "Are you ready?"

I laughed nervously. "I sure hope so. If I'm not, a lot of things could go wrong today."

Scythe put a hand on my shoulder and gave it a squeeze. "Don't worry. You've got this."

"Thanks." I grabbed a plate and started picking out a few items, but my stomach was in knots, and I wasn't sure how much I would actually be able to eat.

Scythe was following me closely, but he wasn't grabbing any food for himself. It gave me the feeling that there was something he wanted to talk about.

I paused and looked at him. "Okay, what is it?"

Scythe's eyes widened. "What do you mean?"

“What’s on your mind?” I asked. He was nervous to bring up the subject, which was unlike him, so I figured I would push it out of him.

Scythe took a deep breath. “Well, Percy and I did a lot of talking while you were gone.”

He paused, so I raised my eyebrows to push him to keep talking.

“We agreed we don’t want to be apart again,” he said.

I let that sink in. I know Percy didn’t want to leave, so I feared what that meant. “So what does that mean for you?” I hoped Scythe wasn’t going to leave Mark’s pack. I had grown very fond of him, and I didn’t want to lose him as a friend.

“We haven’t figured out all of the details, and we will have to talk to the alphas, but we thought maybe we could split our time between the packs. I don’t want to abandon Alpha, but Percy has his loyalties as well.” Scythe looked at the ground, and I could tell he was ashamed of this.

I set down the plate and pulled Scythe into a hug. “I think that’s a great idea.”

Scythe pulled away, and his eyebrows were crinkled. “You do? What about what happened with Jori?”

I shrugged my shoulders. “What about it? You deserve to be happy. I’m going to miss you when you’re not around, but if this is what will be best for you and your mate, I will support you one hundred percent.”

Scythe started beaming. “You’re the best, Adira.” He looked back at Mark and frowned. “Do you think he’ll be upset with me?”

“I’m sure he’ll understand. He knows what it’s like to be away from his mate.” I gave Scythe a reassuring smile, and I could practically feel his worries disappear.

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The rest of the day flew by, and before we knew it, we were packing up the cars to get going. I was supposed to reach out to Theron when we got to the location we wanted to fight at. It would cause the least amount of risk for the humans in town. We worried that if I reached out to Theron too soon, he

would end up shifting to us immediately, instead of meeting at the location I want him too.

We were about to leave the hotel, when I heard someone calling out. When I turned around, I was surprised at who I saw running towards the car.

Percy was waving his hands at us, trying to get our attention. Scythe dropped his stuff and ran over to Percy, kissing him the moment he reached him.

“What are you doing here?” Scythe asked out of breath.

“I’m coming with you guys,” Percy said.

“What about Jori?” Scythe asked.

“You are risking your life, and if anything happens to you while I’m not there, I would never be able to forgive myself,” Percy explained. “So I don’t care about what Jori thinks. I’m coming with you.”

Scythe wrapped his arms around Percy, squeezing him tightly. The two of them walked over to the car, hand in hand.

“It’s good to see you, Percy,” I said. I was relieved to have another person on our side.

“Glad you’re here,” Mark said. “We should get going.”

“I hope I can help this go smoother for you guys so we all come home safely,” Percy said.

“Any help is appreciated.” Mark patted Percy on the arm.

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It took almost an hour to get to the location we agreed upon for the fight. It felt similar to where Theron had me meet him to save Mark, only it was deeper in the woods with no real path leading to it. Mark insisted it be a place humans would unlikely stumble upon, since it was his duty as an alpha to make sure the existence of werewolves stayed as concealed as possible.

The others quickly went off into the woods to scout the area and solidify positions for when Theron would arrive. There was a small clearing where we intended the actual fight to happen, and I stood in the middle of it, thinking

about my part in the plan. Shortly before the moon was set to rise, I would attempt to contact Theron. That way if he showed up right away, it wouldn't be long before the moon would rise, or if he took his time, there would be a large period of time where the moon was out.

From there, the next moves would depend on Theron himself. The goal was to end the fight quickly. We wanted to detain Haley and Theron as quickly as possible, so we wouldn't even have to fight. That was the ideal situation.

As I stood in the middle of the field, there was a sinking feeling in my stomach. I couldn't tell if it was nerves or something more, but I couldn't shake the feeling that things would not go as planned.

I slipped my hand in my pocket, feeling the wooden box Clara had given me. I know Ginger didn't want me to use it, and I knew it would break some moral code, but I couldn't bring myself to leave it behind. If it came down to a friend's life or using this serum on Theron, I wouldn't hesitate to use it. I couldn't promise Ginger I wouldn't use it, but I did tell her it would be my last resort. I needed to know I had the advantage on my side, especially with so many people I cared about being at risk.

I didn't tell any of them about the serum. I was afraid if they knew I had it, they would insist on using it right away. I didn't want that kind of pressure or influence. If I chose to use the belladonna, it needed to be my choice and my burden alone.

Arms slipped around my waist, pulling me from my thoughts. Mark's scent flowed around me, and my worries lessened.

"Are you ready?" he asked.

"Yes. Is it time?" I looked up to the sky. It was dark, but stars were splattered against the dark canvas. The entire forest was dark without the light of the sun or the moon, but that wasn't an issue with our wolf senses. It was another advantage to initiating this fight at night.

"Yes," Mark said. "Everyone is in their positions. If you are ready, then it's go time."

I nodded my head. "Okay, let's do this."

Mark let go of me and stepped back. I closed my eyes and took a deep breath, focusing on reaching out to Moon.

“Are you ready, Moon?” I asked. I had gone over this with her, but we hadn’t been able to actually practice before this. It was too risky to catch Theron’s attention before we were ready.

The world around me started spinning, and when I opened my eyes, I was in the familiar place in my mind. Moon was standing in front of me, flicking her tail back and forth.

“I’m ready,” she said. “Are we sure this is the right thing to do?”

“I don’t see another way to escape Theron’s attacks. I don’t think he is someone who can be reasoned with,” I said. I wished there was a way to compromise and avoid this fight. I had tried to come up with many alternatives, but nothing seemed good enough.

“Let’s do this then,” Moon said.

I sat on the ground and focused on my own magic. Moon hopped into my lap, and I felt the bond with my magic grow stronger. Once I had a firm grip on my magic, I focused on reaching out to magic that felt like mine. At first I couldn’t feel anything, but as I kept reaching out, I started noticing various magics tickling the back of my mind. None of them felt quite right.

Finally, I felt a light that was almost like mine, but it tasted bitter and dark. I instantly knew this was it. I pulled at it, willing it to come close. It was closer than I had anticipated, but not as close as I had thought.

“You finally decided to stop hiding,” a deep voice said from behind me.

I jumped up and turned, seeing Theron standing behind me. His aura was black with streams of purple leaking through it.

My heart was pounding as I looked at him, but I focused on staying calm. “I want this over with. I’m tired of playing this game with you.”

Theron scoffed. “I haven’t been playing a game. I told you I have a goal, and you’re in my way.”

“And you’re in mine,” I retorted.

Theron raised an eyebrow. “And what kind of goal could you possibly have? Have you decided to take our family’s powers afterall?”

“I don’t care about those powers,” I said. “I want to live a life free from worry of someone coming after me.”

Theron smirked at that. “You really are a child if you think that will ever be possible, half-breed.”

“Must I remind you that I’m technically your older sister,” I said.

Theron frowned at this. “You’re no sister of mine.”

“I suppose not. Not really at least. Family isn’t defined by the blood tying you together. A real family is the ones who support and love you no matter what,” I said. “And that’s what I care about. So let’s get this over with. One final battle, all cards on the table. The one who wins gets what they truly desire.” My words sounded more confident than they felt, but I knew this was how I would get Theron to do as I wanted.

“And how am I supposed to trust you? What if this is a trap for me?” Theron asked.

I shrugged. “You’re not supposed to trust me. I sure as hell don’t trust you. Are you saying you are too weak to handle whatever I throw at you?”

Theron’s entire face tightened, and I knew I had him where I wanted him. “You’re going to regret this.”

Theron disappeared, and the connection completely broke. I found myself standing in the middle of the forest again. Mark’s eyes were on me, waiting for me to say something.

I looked at him. “He’s coming.”

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It was completely silent as we waited for Theron to appear. Even the forest seemed to quiet in anticipation. The moon had yet to crest over the horizon, but I knew it was close. I could feel it.

He’s coming, Moon said in my head.

I felt the shift in energy, and then the next moment Theron appeared about fifteen feet away from me. Hailey showed up a split second behind him, which I was anticipating. I felt more energy swirling around me, and my stomach sank. It was all a blur, and I couldn't tell exactly how many different energies there were, but I was hoping for only Theron and Hailey.

One by one, bodies started appearing in the forest. I counted ten in total, and we were outnumbered. This was not good. My heart raced, and despite the chill in the air, sweat started collecting on my forehead.

Theron smirked. "Regretting your decision? You didn't think I would make the same mistake twice by not coming prepared. Your life is mine, Adira."

Everything slowed down at that moment, and I knew this was bad. Mark growled, and I saw him shifting into his wolf form next to me. His wolf was pure white and glowed against the dark sky. This was the first time I had seen his wolf form, and it was absolutely magnificent. He lunged forward, racing for Theron. I was frozen in place as I watched the events unfold in front of me.

Several more wolves lunged from the trees, each picking a target, but there weren't enough of them. A wolf with shining red fur faced off against two young sorcerers, and it looked like Rie was also facing two of them. The rest of them were one on one, except Mark who was lunging at Theron. Hailey stood next to the two of them, ready to assist Theron.

It all happened so fast and yet so slow at the same time. I could feel the battlefield, and I knew exactly what was happening and the next few seconds of what was about to happen. It was like watching a movie I had seen clips of before. I was frozen in place, unable to move.

Move.

Come on.

Don't just stand there.

Move damn it.

Suddenly it was like someone had hit fast forward, and everything sped up. Mark rolled to the ground as Theron shifted out of the way of the attack. Hailey threw a metal object in Mark's direction, but he easily dodged. Theron

was next to Mark in an instant. He landed a blow to Mark's side, sending him rolling to the ground.

Something about this snapped my brain into gear. I looked up at the sky, and the moon was just barely coming over the horizon. It was too early for me to start using my powers, but I knew I had to do something.

Shadow, I need you!

That's all I needed to say. My body shifted into wolf form, and I was lunging forward towards Theron. I leaped over him, landing in between Mark and Theron. Shadow snarled at him, baring our teeth at him. It was completely silent as we waited for Theron to appear. Even the forest seemed to quiet in anticipation. The moon had yet to crest over the horizon, but I knew it was close. I could feel it.

Theron paused, laughing. "Was this your big plan? Ambush me at night, where your wolf senses are heightened? You're still no match for me, and I wasn't a fool to come alone. You are outnumbered, and it's only a matter of time before you and your friends fall."

I shifted back into my human form. Theron's cockiness was rubbing me the wrong way. "You aren't giving me enough credit."

Theron scoffed in return. "And why should I? You're just a half-breed? You know nothing about your magic. I'll tell you what. If you give up this little charade of yours, I will call off my people and only kill you. Everyone else can go free. So what do you say? Your life to spare many?"

This time it was my turn to laugh. "You must be the fool if I would even consider a deal with you. You will regret not giving us enough credit."

"Fine. I'll enjoy making sure all of you mutts die tonight," Theron said. "You've made a few fatal errors in your calculations tonight. One, you definitely didn't bring enough back up."

As if to emphasize his point, I heard the pained cry of a wolf nearby. I didn't see it happen, but I knew it was the wolf with red fur. My chest clenched, hoping he would be okay.

"And two," Theron continued, "I also thrive in the darkness."

Theron raised his hands to the side, his fingers curled half way. In response to his movements, the shadows around us started dancing. Tendrils moved around Theron, ready to strike. I could taste the malice in the darkness, and a flashback of the image of fighting a shadow creature flew through my head. This was different though.

Theron shot his hands forward, and the shadow tendrils flashed forward, aiming straight for my body. I threw my hands up, crossed in front of me for defense. In response, a silver shield of light hovered in front of my body. The tendrils hit the shield, and I could hear a hiss as the light reflected the shadows.

Theron's eyes grew wide, and then the anger overcame him. He created more shadows and lunged them forward, but once again, I easily deflected them. I wasn't sure if it was the adrenaline of the battle, or the full moon climbing the sky, but I felt invigorated. All of the training I had been struggling with came naturally to me now.

Theron kept bombarding me with his attacks, but not a single one managed to hit me. I couldn't find a way to put in a counter attack. All of my energy was being spent on defensive maneuvers. I could feel Theron's frustration grow, and with it, his powers grew stronger. Each attack took more out of me to deflect.

The world around us grew foggy as I kept my focus on Theron. I was vaguely aware of Mark now fighting Haley to keep her off of me, and I knew there were other fights going on, but the awareness I held at the beginning of the fight was now gone. My only focus was on Theron, and stopping him.

I had to figure out a way to change the pace of this fight. I knew deep down that if I could defeat Theron, the rest of the battle would fall into place. Defeat the leader, and the rest would fall. But I didn't know what to do.

I tried to throw a ball of light at Theron as an attack, but in that moment, Theron attacked me, and one of the tendrils hit my arms. It was a shallow wound, but I could feel the blood dripping down my arm. Without hesitation, there were more attacks hitting me, and I went back to the defensive.

I was slowly backing up as Theron advanced. Between the lights dancing around the shadows, I could see flashes of Theron. His face was twisted with pleasure. He knew he was going to win, which only fueled his strength.

I could feel myself start to panic. I didn't know what to do. I wasn't strong enough as a sorceress to take him down, and if he defeated me, he would go after my friends, and one by one we would all fall. My heart raced as my worst fears came true. I felt desperate. I had to find a way to use the belladonna on Theron.

I tried shifting right behind him, but he anticipated my moves, using his tendrils to trip me. I fell backwards, the wind completely knocked out of me. For a moment, I couldn't breathe.

Theron stood over me, cockiness filling every crease in his face. "I'm going to enjoy this."

No! Moon shouted in my head.

I felt a tingle in my chest, and suddenly a burst of light emerged from my chest. A cat made of moonlight danced from my body and into the air. She looked magical as she pounced through the air. Moon landed on Theron's face, screeching and scratching him in the face. He tried to tear her off him, but his hands just went through the moonlight, unable to get a grip.

I dug into my pocket, pulling out the little wooden box and removing the syringe. I tossed the box to the side and jumped to my feet, knowing this would be the only opportunity I could get to do this. I lunged forward, ready to stab Theron and inject him with the belladonna.

Theron created a tendril and used it to throw Moon off of him. She flung off him, landing on her side with a thud. I hesitated for a second, shocked by the noise of her hitting the ground. A second was too much, though, and Theron grabbed my arm, stopping me from injecting him with the serum.

He twisted my arm, causing me to cry out in pain and let go of the syringe. It fell through the air, and everything seemed to slow down again, and I knew I had messed up. A shadowy tendril flew through the air and grabbed the syringe. Theron plucked the little device from the shadow and swung forward. The needle pierced my skin, and I felt the serum dance through my veins. It was so cold, and I stopped breathing.

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"Moon, what's happening?" I asked. I was in my mind, but instead of the familiar white surrounding me, it was only dark. I could see Moon just a little

bit ahead of me, but she was hard to see. It was almost like she was a ghost, fading away.

I rushed to her side. She was lying down, and looked tired, but she was still breathing.

"I'll be okay," Moon said. "I need to take a nap for a while though. I'm tired."

"But we have to fight Theron. We have to defeat him and save our friends." I knelt down and tried to pick up Moon, but my hands went right through her. "We can't give up now."

"I'm sorry. I can't help you," Moon said, her voice a mere whisper.

Moon faded away, and I felt completely lost. All of the training suddenly was for nothing, and we were going to lose.

"Don't just stand there," another voice said. Shadow leaped out from the darkness, landing behind Moon. "We have work to do."

In a blink of an eye, I was back in the forest, Theron standing over me with the syringe still in his hand. His eyes beamed with joy, like everything was already over.

My chest heaved up and down, and I felt weaker than before, but there was a different energy coursing through me. I lifted my hand, trying to attack Theron with magic, but nothing happened. The belladonna suppressed my magic.

Theron let out a laugh. "You thought you could play dirty tricks with me, but it backfired on you. Now you are defenseless. Time to die."

He raised his hands, creating several dark tendrils. He flicked his wrists, and they came flying towards me. I heard Mark snarl as they started to wrap around my body. I was surprisingly calm, and the tendrils didn't hurt like I had anticipated. They almost tickled. I took a deep breath and felt a power growing deep inside of me.

Laughter escaped my lips, and I saw Theron's lip twitch.

"You're about to die. Why are you laughing?" he demanded.

It was my turn to smirk. “You have forgotten the most important fact about me,” I said. “I am the daughter of the moon. The darkness does not hurt me. In fact, I live in the darkness. I illuminate it. I thrive in it.”

A flash of light exploded from within me, causing the tendrils to wisp away from me. In a split second, I transformed into my wolf form, and Shadow took over. We flew towards Theron, landing directly on him. Shadow sank her teeth into his arm, causing Theron to cry out in pain.

He shifted away from us, but we instantly knew where he was shifting. I could still feel his magic, even though I could no longer feel my own. I knew exactly where he was and what his next move would be.

Theron tried to attack again, but it was easy to dodge the movements. It was like I was tapped into his magic. I could feel every breath, every movement, every intention. I didn’t understand why, but I didn’t take the time to question it. The moon was high in the sky now, and every cell in my body was invigorated.

We lunged at Theron again, biting his other arm. He shifted again, standing several feet away from us. Blood was seeping down both of his arms. He lifted a hand up at me, but he couldn’t keep it steady.

“Stay back.” His confidence was waning.

Shadow took the next step, jumping after him. Theron shifted away yet again, but Shadow twisted midair, catching Theron right as he landed. We pinned him to the ground and snarled in his face. He gritted his teeth, but he struggled to get away. He closed his eyes, stilling for a moment. However, when he opened his eyes, all color was gone, and they were consumed with darkness.

“You think you’re so great,” Theron spat through his gritted teeth. “You think you are so powerful, but even right now, your friends are falling one by one.”

My heart raced at that thought, but I didn’t dare look away from Theron. It wasn’t worth the risk of it being a trick, and there was nothing I could do for my friends until Theron was taken care of anyway. Shadow growled at Theron. She wasn’t about to put up with him.

Theron shifted again, but he was closer to us this time. I could tell he was weakened from the blood loss. His breathing was labored, and he was

seething. He lifted his hands, but he turned away from me. I saw him facing Mark, who was in the middle of a battle with Haley. He seemed to be holding his ground, but he didn't notice Theron's attention on him.

"Moon, what's happening?" I asked. I was in my mind, but instead of the familiar white surrounding me, it was only dark. I could see Moon just a little bit ahead of me, but she was hard to see. It was almost like she was a ghost, fading away.

Dark tendrils shot from Theron, aimed right at Mark. Shadow bolted forward, but we weren't going to make it in time. Fear radiated through me, and I changed back to my human form, shifting mid-leap, appearing between Theron and Mark just in time.

The shadows danced through the air, and I lifted my hands to block them, even though I knew my magic wouldn't work to stop them. The darkness hit my hands, but instead of hurting me like before, they slid into my palms, and I could feel them sliding through my veins. They twisted and turned in my body, wrapping around my core.

The bright magic I usually saw was nowhere to be seen, but the shadows curled around themselves, creating a dark shadowy ball where my light magic usually sat. For a moment, I felt light headed and shaky. This energy was different from what I was used to, and it made me feel sick.

Theron's jaw hung open as he stared at me. "How did you do that? The belladonna should have taken away all of your magic by now. That blow should have destroyed you. How?"

My breath was rapid and out of control. I couldn't answer Theron's question, because I didn't understand it myself. This wasn't my magic filling my core. It was borrowed and tainted. Instead of taking the blow, somehow I had absorbed Theron's magic. If this was what sat inside of him normally, I could understand how he had become so full of anger.

"You threaten my life. Then you threaten my friends. Now you threaten my mate." I could feel the anger seething through me as I faced Theron. This wasn't like me, but the hatred for the man in front of me boiled deeper than it ever had. "Do you honestly think you have a chance of living now?"

I walked towards Theron with slow deliberate steps. He lifted his hands, but nothing happened. His whole body was shaking, and his eyes were wide.

“What did you do with my magic?” he asked, panic clear in his higher-pitched voice.

“Oh this?” I asked, making tendrils appear from my hands. This wasn’t like me. I felt like I was watching someone else, someone dark, control my body. “You didn’t know how to properly use this magic. You are weak, and don’t deserve the power you crave.” I laughed at the thought. What was happening to me? Nothing about this was funny. “I suppose it’s not your fault. You are merely the second child. You haven’t even come of age yet.”

“Stay back. If you come any closer, I’ll-”

“What?” I interrupted. “Kill me? How? You’re powerless now. It’s time to end all of this.”

I lifted my hands and sent the dark magic flying forward. The tendrils wrapped around Theron’s neck, and I lifted him in the air. This felt good. I had never felt so powerful before, and some part of me liked it.

Another part of me was absolutely terrified.

The entire battlefield was quiet, and I was suddenly aware of everyone’s eyes on the two of us. I could end it all now. I could choke the life out of Theron now and move on with my life. I heard him struggling to breathe, and I wanted to take out all of the anger I ever held out on him.

“Adira!” Mark called my name, running up to me.

I was aware of his presence right next to me, but somehow he felt so far away.

“Stay out of this,” I warned Mark. This was my business to finish off.

“Adira, what’s going on with you. Your eyes are completely dark, and this isn’t like you,” Mark said.

I could hear the worry in his voice, but I didn’t understand it. One way or another, we knew either Theron or I would die tonight. I was just ensuring it was not me. I commanded the tendrils to squeeze Theron’s neck harder, and I heard him struggling to breathe.

“I’m fine, Mark.”

“No, you’re not.” Mark grabbed my arm. “I hate this man for threatening your life and our chance for happiness. But whatever this darkness is inside of you, isn’t you. Please stop. I don’t want you doing anything you’ll regret.”

Mark’s touch sent a flicker of light through me, and suddenly I felt like I couldn’t breathe, and my head was cloudy. He was right. What was wrong with me? I was enjoying the thought of killing Theron, and that was not okay. Killing in self defense was completely different than killing for fun. I tried to lower my hands, but the darkness inside of me felt too strong. I couldn’t move my arms.

“I can’t stop.” My voice was shaky, and I felt the tears threatening my eyes. I didn’t want to kill Theron like this. “Mark, I want to stop. I can’t.”

Mark threw his body in front of mine and pulled me into him. I saw the pained expression as the shadows hit him, and that triggered something deeper inside of me. My body went limp, and the tendrils retreated. I started hyperventilating, but Mark held onto me tightly.

“It’s okay. I’ve got you, Adira,” Mark whispered into my ear. He stroked my hair, trying to calm me down.

I could feel the battle ravaging my body. I didn’t want the darkness anymore, but it didn’t want to leave. I didn’t have my own light magic to fight it off. The only thing keeping me grounded was Mark’s grip around my body. I needed to get a hold of myself and release the magic.

I lifted my arms into the air and let out a scream. The dark tendrils emerged from my hands and sprang into the sky. They completely left my body, and a new level of exhaustion overflowed every muscle. I collapsed into Mark’s body, letting him support me completely.

“Adira?” he said, completely panicked.

“I’m okay,” I whispered. “Thanks to you, I’m okay.”

Mark hugged me tighter. “Thank goodness. I don’t know what I would do without you.”

“Watch out!” Rie screamed from across the battlefield.

I looked up just in time to see Theron swing his arm, dagger in hand. He was aiming right for Mark. With Rie's warning, Mark quickly turned, grabbing Theron by the wrist. In one swift motion, Mark twisted Theron's arm, plunging the dagger into Theron's heart. Theron gasped as the blade went into his body. He stumbled backwards, tripping over himself until he fell flat on his back.

Mark stood over Theron, his face solemn. "You underestimated the quick reflexes of werewolves. We may not have magic like you, but we weren't as weak as you thought. We might have actually let you live too, but you couldn't stop yourself."

"You think this is over?" Theron managed to sputter out. "I'm not the only one who wants your mate dead. Just you wait."

"What is that supposed to mean?" Mark demanded.

Theron struggled to breathe as blood started pouring out of his chest. He coughed up some blood. "This fight may be over, but the war has just begun. Just you wait."

Mark reached down and grabbed Theron's shirt, lifting him up. "Who else would want Adira dead?"

Theron smiled, coughing up more blood. He didn't have a chance to respond before he stopped moving, but I was sure that's the way he wanted it. Mark shook his body, demanding answers.

"Mark," I called out softly. I was sitting on my knees, unable to move from lack of energy. "He's dead. He can't answer you."

Mark stopped and let out a sigh of frustration. He dropped Theron's body before moving to me. "Why would he say that? This was supposed to be over. We are supposed to get out happily ever after now."

I cupped Mark's face. "I'm sure he was just trying to get into our heads. He lost, and he wanted to try to mess with us from the grave. I'm sure it was nothing. For now, let's just focus on the positive. We won. We did it."

I looked around the battlefield, and the other sorcerers had started to flee. Without their leader, they had no reason to stick around. There were some

injuries on our side, but nothing was permanent or serious. Slowly we gathered our composers.

Mark helped me to my feet, and I took one last look at Theron. Relief washed over me as I stared at his lifeless body. I didn't wish for anyone to die, but it was over. I was finally safe.

The Unwanted Wolf – Chapter 65

It took several days for me to recover from the attack. Luckily, my werewolf abilities weren't affected, and my body was able to heal pretty quickly. However, my magic stayed dormant for several days, and a deep level of exhaustion filled my bones. Mark insisted we stay in town while I healed, not wanting to put me through a long car ride home in my condition. I didn't argue with him. There was something on my mind, and staying in Asheville for a little longer gave me the time I needed to sort it out.

Rie and the three new arrivals ended up going back to the pack house first. Rie wanted to stick around, but Mark had been away for too long, and she wanted to check on the rest of the pack to make sure everyone was doing okay.

Scythe stayed in town while Mark and I were there. He stayed at Jori's pack house with Percy while we were there. I wasn't sure if Scythe had sat down and talked to Mark about his and Percy's situation. I had spent most of the days lying in the bed in the hotel. I was in and out of sleep throughout the days, and almost every time I woke up, Mark was by my side.

The next time I woke up, I saw the sun peaking through the window. When I checked the time, I thought it would be best to actually get out of bed. My body was still tired, but mentally I was getting tired of staying in bed. When I looked around, Mark was nowhere to be seen. I sent him a quick text to let him know I was awake and then hopped into the shower.

It would be time to return home soon and start our lives, but the idea of returning to my job as a coffee shop manager felt so meaningless now. There seemed to be so many other priorities now. If I was going to be the luna of Mark's pack, I would have to learn about what those responsibilities entailed. I didn't know what all that entailed.

My mother was the luna of our pack, but she didn't train me specifically. I would watch her go about her duties when I was a child. I came to a few

meetings she had, but for the most part I was left at home. She said she would teach me more when I came of age, but since I wouldn't be the luna of a pack anytime soon, she wanted me to enjoy my childhood. At the time, I didn't argue. What teenager didn't want to avoid responsibilities, especially when given the chance?

I regretted not pushing her more on the matter, because now I didn't even know where to begin.

I was a quick learner, though, and with Mark's help, I was sure I would be able to figure it out. Part of me wished I could reach out and ask my mother for help. It had been five years since I last spoke to her, and even though part of me was still hurt she didn't stand up for me and she lied to me about who my father truly was, I still missed her.

I turned off the shower and wrapped myself in a towel. I left the bathroom in search of fresh clothes. I jumped when arms suddenly wrapped around me from behind.

Mark immediately started giggling. I turned around and playfully smacked him on the chest.

"Did you have to scare me like that?" I asked, exasperated.

Mark giggled a little more. "You look so cute when you're scared though."

I stuck my tongue out at him, and then I wrapped my arms around his neck and let myself lean into him. "You're evil."

Mark slid his arms around my waist. "Maybe. But you're the one who chose me."

I rolled my eyes in response and then lifted up on my toes to give him a peck. "Apparently it's because I like being tortured."

Mark smirked. "Hmm, I like the way that sounds." He kissed me again, this time letting it linger. "Are you feeling better?"

I nodded my head. "Much."

"Good enough to..." His voice grew quiet, and he gave me a look that told me more than enough.

I smiled, tempted by his offer, but there were more important matters I needed to address. Otherwise, I knew we could get way too distracted by each other.

“Actually, there’s something I wanted to talk to you about,” I said, pulling back just a little.

Mark tilted his head. “What’s on your mind?”

I bit my lip, feeling nervous. I hoped Mark wouldn’t get mad at me for this. “Well, I was thinking about our future, and the future of your pack.”

“Our pack,” Mark corrected. “You’re going to be my luna after all.”

I smiled at his correction. It felt good knowing there was somewhere I could belong. “Our pack. I was also thinking about the situation with Percy and Scythe. And Daniel, and everyone else. I know why you left, and I know it wasn’t an easy decision. And things with Jori are not great. I don’t really want to be around him either.”

It took several days for me to recover from the attack. Luckily, my werewolf abilities weren’t affected, and my body was able to heal pretty quickly. However, my magic stayed dormant for several days, and a deep level of exhaustion filled my bones. Mark insisted we stay in town while I healed, not wanting to put me through a long car ride home in my condition. I didn’t argue with him. There was something on my mind, and staying in Asheville for a little longer gave me the time I needed to sort it out.

“Adira, you’re not breathing. Slow down and take a breath, and then just tell me what’s on your mind.” Mark gave me a reassuring smile.

I took a breath like he said. My nerves were definitely creeping up on me, and I hadn’t realized how much I was rambling. “I think we should move the pack back to Asheville. I know things will be complicated because of Jori’s pack, but I think it would be best for everyone. We wouldn’t have to keep the pack members separated.” I looked at the ground, afraid of what Mark’s face was saying right now.

“What about you?” Mark asked.

I looked up, surprised by his question. “What do you mean?”

“You moved so far away because of your family. Your hometown isn’t that far from here. You would run the risk of accidentally running into your family. Plus

with how Jori treated you... Would you be okay if our packs had to interact and you ran into him?" Mark let go of my waist and cupped my cheeks. "I admire how much you care about our pack, and I know you want Scythe and Percy to be happy, but I don't want this to cost you any happiness."

My heart was vibrating. I was so worried that Mark would be upset that I suggested he move back to his enemy that I hadn't thought about his concern for me.

"I've thought about all of that. While I don't particularly want to see my family, I think I could hold my own if I were to run into them," I said. "And as for Jori, as long as I have you by my side, I don't care who else is around me. You're the only one I want to be with, and I can handle being civil with him if necessary."

Mark nodded along. "Okay. Then let's do it."

"Really?"

Mark smiled. "I think you're right. Seeing everyone at Jori's pack house reminded me how much I missed some of them, and I understand why they wouldn't want to leave a stable pack house for something new. Not everyone knows the truth of what happened either, and that's not something I ever wanted to force onto them. But those who chose to come with me left friends and family behind. If we can get Jori to agree to this, then I think you're right. It's time to come home."

I smiled and pecked Mark on the cheek. "You're amazing, you know that?"

Mark laughed. "I don't think I did anything that warrants the adjective 'amazing.'"

"I disagree with that. You surprise me all of the time with how understanding you are. You actually listen to me and my ideas." I shrugged, feeling a little emotional. "I guess I just feel lucky to have found you."

Mark leaned down and kissed me. "I'm the one who is lucky. I'm excited to finally get our life started together, too."

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I felt nervous walking up to Jori's pack house. Scythe and Percy were able to arrange the meeting with Jori after some convincing. Mark wanted to join me

in the meeting, but I insisted he didn't come. Jori and Mark didn't get along as is. I didn't want things to turn into a testosterone show off instead of having a productive conversation. I wasn't even sure if I would be able to have a productive conversation after everything that went down with Jori and me.

I knocked on the door after a moment of convincing myself not to back down. As a future luna, I was sure this would be just one of the types of responsibilities. This meeting should be short, and then I would be back with Mark.

The door opened, and I was greeted by Percy and Scythe, standing hand in hand. I instantly felt better knowing they would be in the meeting with me. I knew Jori was more likely to keep it civil in front of others, especially one of his own pack members. The two of them led me to the meeting room where I first met Jori.

We were the first ones to arrive, and I felt a little strange sitting there. It hadn't been that long since we were here, looking for answers, but so much had happened that it felt like a lifetime ago.

"He'll be here soon," Percy said. By the way his eyes had just glazed over, I knew Percy had just linked Jori. I missed that feeling. Since Mark and I hadn't officially marked each other, we didn't have that ability yet, but I was sure it would happen soon. We didn't want to rush into it, especially when we were under threat.

The door opened, and a pain shot through my chest at the sight of Jori. It was less than it had been before, but being around him brought up the feeling of rejection from before. I wondered if he felt any pain like I did or if it was a one-sided pain.

Jori made eye contact with me, and I shuddered at his gaze. I could almost feel his hatred with a simple look. My nerves quickly began to grow, and I knew I had to start now before I quickly lost all of my nerves.

I stood up, trying to appear more confident than I felt. "Thank you for agreeing to meet me."

Jori sat down in his chair, slouching back. He didn't bother to say anything.

I swallowed hard and sat down as well. I continued, realizing Jori wasn't going to say anything. "This is a courtesy meeting on behalf of Pack Aphelion."

“Ah, you’re already speaking on behalf of his pack,” Jori said harshly. “Did he not even have the guts to face me himself?”

Instantly, I felt defensive from Jori’s words. I squeezed my fists together, trying to stay calm. Reacting to Jori’s rudeness would not get us anywhere. “I thought it best if I came by myself, given your history with Mark.”

Jori scoffed at me. “What makes you think you’re any better?”

I stood, my shoulders tense and my gaze pointed. “Jori, I never wanted to hurt you. I didn’t want us to get on such negative terms, but you didn’t give me much of a choice. You didn’t respect me or what I wanted.” I took a deep breath, realizing my tone was getting out of hand. “Anyway, that’s not the point. I am merely here as a courtesy to let you know that Pack Aphelion will be moving to Asheville. It is in the best interest of our pack members to return.”

This got Jori’s attention, and he stood up as well. He looked down at me with rage coursing through him. “Are you trying to taunt me? Wave this betrayal pack in my face? Shove your love for Mark down my throat? I didn’t think you would go to such levels.”

I looked at the ground, feeling sad that Jori would jump to such conclusions. He truly never knew me as a person. He only wanted me because we were “soul mates”, but he didn’t want me for me. “No. That is not the reason. The reason is because Scythe and Percy are mates, which I’m sure you are fully aware of. It’s because our pack members are friends with yours, and we don’t want to keep them separated from each other any longer. We have no intention of starting anything with you. We don’t even have to associate with each other. I hope you believe me, but I don’t plan on trying to waste my energy on convincing you on this.”

I grabbed my things and started heading towards the door. I paused in the doorway and turned to face Jori. “I don’t want to hate you. Part of me still cares about you, too, but if this is how you plan on treating me, you better take a look in the mirror. How did you ever expect me to choose you with behavior like this?”

I didn’t give Jori a chance to respond before leaving. I said what I came to say, and I was eager to be back in Mark’s arms where I felt safe. I walked straight for the door, leaving Percy and Scythe behind as well. I rushed out the front door and went straight towards the car.

“Adira!”

I froze, hearing my name be called. Slowly, I turned around, seeing Jori standing on the porch. I didn’t say anything, knowing I had already said everything I needed to.

He walked towards me, but he stopped ten feet away from me. “I’m sorry. You’re right. I haven’t been treating you right. This hasn’t been easy on me.”

I blinked at him, still having nothing to say. An apology wouldn’t make up for everything.

He shifted on his feet. “I still need some space to get over everything that happened, but I hope maybe one day we can be friends. In case you don’t believe me, here.” He held out his hand. There was something small and covered in cloth on it.

I hesitated to grab it. Part of me wondered if he was being genuine or if this was some kind of trick. Finally, I closed the gap between us and grabbed the item from Jori’s hand. He nodded to me and then disappeared back into the pack house.

I looked at the item left in my hand. It was a silver medallion with a wolf etched in it. The detail in the silver was immaculate with little crescent moons surrounding the wolf. My heart swelled, looking at the item. I knew exactly what it was. It was Mark’s grandfather’s alpha medallion.

Hope filled me, knowing this was a big gesture. Maybe all of this would work out for us in the end, and we could live peacefully between the two packs.