

Cursed Luna

Chapter 1 | Cursed Luna



“The moon is almost at its peak. Pour more water!”

“Yes, Mother priestess.”

The silver-haired girl, chained naked on the wooden table, screams in agonizing pain.

The adept Priestess dips a metal ladle into the scorching hot water and then pours the water on the screaming girl.

“Every inch of her body must be cleansed. She must not be allowed to shift! Again!”

“And this will cleanse her? Prevent her from shifting and the corruption from pouring into the pack?”

The Mother Priestess gives the Luna a convincing nod. “Yes, Luna. She has turned eighteen. It is when all wolves gain their soul wolf, and she must not be allowed to shift, ever. We must endure this till morning.”

“These screams might distress some of the pack members.”

“Tell them the truth. The Accursed is the evil one here, and these purifying rituals are necessary.”

“She doesn’t look evil.” The Alpha mutters.

The Mother Priestess scoffs, “Evil is inside of her, whether she looks it or not.”

They watch the clear parts of the girl’s skin sprout boils as her skin melts. A testament to the pain she endures.

“We must not allow her to shift! Again!”

As the girl’s flesh is exposed to high heat, the smell of cooked meat, mixed with a strange, sweet undertone, invades the space of the small dungeon.

One of the priestesses watching scrunches her face in disgust and covers her nose.

“We must endure this every full moon when the evil will be tempted to sprout. Now, keep praying to the goddess.”

The girl heard nothing that was spoken, for all her attention was on the pain that was being brought to her. She is not estranged to pain, but not even the constant beatings with the metal bats compare to this. For the first time, the young girl starts to believe that death is better than this madness. A madness they want her to endure every full moon now that she has come of age and her spirit wolf has surfaced, just as it happens for every werewolf, but not the torture. The torture is reserved only for her.

“Do not allow her to shift! Her cursed soul must not be allowed to come forth!”

~Senua~

“Senua...”

“No...NO!” I leap out of my bed, gasping for air and wiping my sweaty forehead. The desperation and abysmal hopelessness start to subside as I realize that I am back in my darkness. I close my eyes, holding my head, trying not to relive those horrible nights. My neck hurts, but it always hurts. The metal neck brace around it makes my skin irritated, especially at night. The chain attached to it is hooked to a metal slab on the floor in the middle of the room. I have had these since I was five, and I can’t remember a day that it has been off.

I stare at the ceiling, wondering why I keep waking every morning. If I could just make myself never wake up again, I would. And that voice. Always in my head calling my name.

Light shines through the cracked wall. A hole big enough to fit a grown man made by the shaking of the earth, which I was told was called an earthquake. It is closed off with silver bars but overlooks a small meadow of wildflowers, which I call my garden. Thankfully, they didn’t block it back with bricks. This dungeon is old, and it is my room. Humid and stuffy. The only place I have known since I was born.

With a sigh, I get up and walk to the crack in the wall, landing my eyes on the beautiful flowers. Blue Lobelias... a flower native to almost all warmer regions of the world. These are the only flowers that grow in my tiny garden. A garden that my sole option is only to look at. The bars invade my sight. I wish I could get closer to see the flowers better, but I dare not touch the bars or they will burn my skin. It is what silver does to a werewolf. This garden is the only semblance I have that there is a world outside these four walls. It has been my only world since I was born. The only comfort I have is my beautiful flowers. It makes me sad that I can’t touch them. They are out of arm’s reach. The morning dew decorates the blooming Lobelias, catching the little light that is left from the cloudy skies. Beyond them, a wall of trees obscures my view. A forest that I can only assume goes for miles. It rains, but it always rains here in the middle of Appalachia. Especially during Spring.

My days only consist of reading smuggled books or singing. That is, when I am not being cleansed, which tends to be painful. My life is meaningless.

My little friend suddenly chirps. A little golden brown bird called a Veery. It comes down in the mornings and before nightfall to sing to me. Mostly because I drew it in with some seeds, but it has gotten used to me. The rest of the day passes as it always does. I dream of far-off places.

To my surprise, the heavy door behind me opens. I look back and see Sirsha walk in. A woman who shares my bloodline, but I cannot call her sister, for I will be punished for it.

“Senua.” She calls for me.

I turn back to the view in front of me. “Yes?” I reply. My voice is low and monotonous. There is no life to it.

“Senua...today...the Grand Ceremony commences.” She looks down, unable to meet my stare.

I don’t know how to feel. Horrible pain will be inflicted on me in the next few days. Pain, I am not unaccustomed to. But...it will calm the voice in my head. The demon that calls to me. It is a ceremony that will end it all. At least that is what I have been told.

“I see.” That is all I say.

I never thought this day would come, but I welcome it.

I give her a smile. “It’s okay.”

“I am here to start preparing you.” She whispers.

“Prepare me?”

She nods. “There will be a dinner that you will attend to.”

“I will?!” I have never been to the pack house, even though my dungeon is attached to it.

“Yes.”

I turn to the garden as she settles behind me. She gently grabs my long hair and starts brushing it. I feel peace, even though these next few days will be the most hell I will experience. I must be cleansed of my impurities, yet all I can think of is what comes at the end. Will I be free? Finally? Sweet nothingness. Peace at last.

“I...am so sorry,” Sirsha whispers.

I bite my lip, feeling a touch of emotion well up inside me. If things were different, of course, I would not want to die. But that is the only peace I will have, and I am okay with it. That is what waits for me at the end of the Grand Ceremony. Death.

Sirsha snuffles. "Today, you will be prettied up. You are going to wear such a pretty dress, and it is your favorite color, blue. Just like your flowers."

"I will wear a dress?"

"Yes. The five-day ceremony starts tomorrow, but today you will dine with the Alpha and Luna." She gasps. "And the mask you will be wearing. It is gorgeous." For just a second, a ghost of a smile appears on my lips.

Five days of torture...a few days later, it would have been my birthday. But I won't be here for it.

Silence now stretches.

"Such beautiful hair, like white silk," Sirsha whispers. She always has kind words for me. But I do not see it as she does. My white hair is an omen of my curse.

Out of my three caretakers, she is the only one who ever speaks kindly to me or directly at me. "I am going to curl it so you look extra pretty."

"Stop speaking to her, Sirsha!" Delia reprimands her as she walks in. An older, unkind woman with strict features. She is one of the Moon Priestesses and is in charge of Sirsha and the other caretaker, Ida, who is now lurking in the corner.

Delia briskly hangs a dress on the wall. "You have a big night tonight. You must behave. You'll be in the presence of the Mother Priestess, the Alpha, Luna, and their son. Enjoy it because it will be the best thing you will have in this world. Think of it as your last meal." She snickers.

I know what my duty is. I have been told since I could understand words. It has been beaten into my brain. I am the Accursed, and my one purpose is to die before my twenty-first birthday, as it has been foretold by the Mother Priestess. I have known this since I could speak. The notion has been embedded in me, and I have accepted my fate. The fact is that I am not even afraid. I welcome it. I have been numb to my feelings for a long time.

I look at the pretty dress. I have never worn something like that. Sirsha was right, it is in my favorite color.

"Do you understand!?" Delia whacks her whacking stick on the old coffee table.

It makes me jump, but I immediately nod.

“Words! Use your words when you address me!” She points the stick at my face and grazes my cheek.

”Yes...Ma’am,” I stutter, keeping what little emotions I have in check.

After what seems like an eternity, Sirsha taps my shoulder letting me know that she is done, and gets up, but I feel something under my white old robe—the only piece of clothing I own— two of them to be exact. Under me, there is something she placed, but since Delia is still here, I must keep it concealed. I moved it under the table. I have a stash of books under my mattress that Sirsha has given me, and I am sure this is another. She is the one who taught me to read and a bit of what the world has to offer. Yet, I know I will never see it.

“Let me see your back.” Delia pulls my robe and exposes my skin. I never fight or force myself away. I know the consequences of making her mad.

“This is where the scriptures will appear. One on each purifying ritual. They will help stop your awakening.”

My awakening...the day that the evil will consume me. On my twenty-first birthday.

“What will they mean?” Sirsha asks. “The scripture.”

“The senile thoughts of an old foolish woman.” Sometimes I speak, and I don’t even know that I am the one speaking. It is as if someone else takes control of me. My voice does not even sound like my own.

“WHAT DID YOU SAY?!” Delia shouts, enraged.

My eyes widened, realizing that I was the one who spoke.

Delia grabs me by the chain attached to my neck and pulls me. I slam to the ground as Sirsha moves away, unable to do anything.

She looks away as I feel a weight on my back. Delia presses her foot on my back, pinning me to the ground, and holds the chain tightly, choking me.

“You demon! How dare you speak of the Mother Priestess in such a way!”

Searing pain goes across my bare back. A sharp sting that gets worse, like your skin is being peeled away inch by inch as her hand comes down over and over. As if she were slicing something that you would never consider to be alive. I scream, or at least I try, but only gargling sounds come out. The pain is horrible, but it is incomparable to the need I feel to breathe. I feel the heat sizzling. My back is on fire. My vision blurs and my mind screams. I want to scream with my voice, but my voice is gone, choked out by the tight collar.

“Priestess, she must be able to get to the dinner.” Sirsha rapidly says.

I feel it all stop. I am finally able to breathe when she loosens her grip on the chain. On the floor next to me lies the flail she used on my back. A multi-tailed whip with sharp razors at the end of the tips. They are stained with fresh blood.

“Yes, you are right,” Delia says. “Get her cleaned up and ready.” She steps back, I am finally able to move. “Ida, come here!” She shouts.

Ida, the third caretaker, walks in.

“Help take care of this mess,” Delia says before leaving the room.

My body shakes uncontrollably, and all I can do now is cry.