

His Rejected Mateless Luna Chapter 16

Nathan

Sunlight streamed into my father's lavish sickroom, lending false vigor to his gaunt features against the plush pillows.

I prayed the dawn's radiance portended hope, not a cruel irony Father had lingered languidly near death's door for weeks as his mysterious illness wasted his body relentlessly away, always rlying just long enough to kindle fragile hope before the next precipitous decline.

But now, miraculously, in the scant handful of days since Terra's arrival, that dreaded pattern seemed to have reversed. No longer did Father lie motionless but for labored breaths, the stillness of a tomb except for the pestilent stench of decay permeating the heavy velvet drapes around his four-poster bed,

Now he could sit upright unaided for short period cid enough to hold fragmented conversation or sip broth and weakened tea. The pallid tinge to his skin showe signs of healthy pink renewal. Even his silver mane and beard

gleamed brighter, as if reflecting an inner vitalityiting.

Each small sign of returning strength felt astonishing.

None of the seven prior specialist healers had managed to provide more than transient flickers of false hope before Father inevitably slid back toward death's insatiable grasp. But somehow, incredibly, Terra had succeeded where so many knowledgeable experts failed.

Not that it entirely surprised me. The extraordinary depth of Terra's empathy and compassion had showed even as a young orphan new to our pack.

When we first met as children scarcely old enough to shift forms, I had been both fascinated and humbled by her instinctive kindness toward all living things, even the lowliest beetles or spiders other young wolves reflexively crushed without a thought.

That rare spirit of grace had only grown stronger in our years apart, distilling into a potent elixir that seemed to heal broken souls as readily as failing bodies..

I lingered in the doorway a moment, observing unnoticed as Terra fluttered briskly about the room, busily tidying pill bottles and replacing stale water in the crystal carafes on the nightstand. Mundane tasks, yet she performed them with such sincere care, as if my father's comfort superseded all else. Her very presence seemed to radiate vitality, flowing into him like restorative light.

When she leaned over to plump the goose down pillows herself rather than calling for a servant, fiery curls escaping the loose braid falling down her back, my breath arrested painfully in my chest.

Even focused intently on some simple chore, head bent, she was resplendent. The gracious maturity she had grown into only enhanced her ethereal beauty. I could have lingered worshipfully in that doorway observing her forever.

As if sensing my heavy stare, Terra glanced up abruptly from smoothing the silk coverlet. Surprise flitted across her delicate features before she schooled them back to impassiveness. After an awkward pause, she inclined her head politely.

“Good morning, Nathan. I trust you slept well?” The propriety in her tone remained guarded, but lacked the icy undercurrent from when she first arrived.

We had settled into an uneasy truce for Father’s sake, interacting with cautious civility if little real warmth. But I clung to each small sign her wariness diminished, proof my devoted patience was slowly wearing her defenses down.

Very well, thank you.” Sleep remained elusive with her so near, my hyper-aware senses attuned to Terra’s every movement within these walls. But I masking the lingering fatigue from restless nights pacing empty halls. She need not know the visceral ache of our damaged bond kept me from rest.

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Chapter 16

Clearing my throat, I stepped farther into the sunlit room, careful not to approach too closely and trigger unease. “And how is our patient faring this fine morning?”

Improving daily, it seems.” Terra’s clinical tone softened slightly with a smile toward the bed where Father dozed upright against plush pillows. “His strength returns more each day. I believe he’s past the worst of it now.”

“He has you to thank for this miraculous turnaround,” I said earnestly. Her rare unguarded smile made my chest constrict. But it hurts to feel it has nothing to do with me. But it’s of like of the proud doctor seeing his patients heal. “I can never fully express my gratitude, Terra.”

Pink bloomed on her fair cheeks at the effusive praise, but Terra kept her eyes trained on straightening the items on the nightstand, avoiding my fervent gaze. “Your father’s fortitude plays the largest role in any healing,” she deflected modestly. “I merely facilitated what his spirit already yearned to accomplish

“A kind perspective, but you give yourself too little credit.” Unable to resist, I gently grasped her slim wrist as she reached to fluff the pillows yet again, stilling her nervous fussing. Her almond-shaped eyes jerked up to meet mine, lips parting instinctively. The fresh, delicate scent rolling off he

addled my senses.

“This family owes you far more than we can ever repay,” I continued hoarsely. “Especially myself. You’ve given back years I never deserved with him. I won’t forget that, Terra.”

Her lithe wrist remained captured in my light clasp, pulse thrumming rapidly against my fingertips.

Those striking mossy eyes held mine a heartbeat longer, uncertainty warring across her delicate features. The lean cords of muscle in her arm tensed subtly, though she did not pull away.

Just then Father stirred slightly, turning his head toward us with a sleepy murmur.

The spell broke – Terra quickly extricated herself from my loose grasp, cheeks blooming a charming pink. Clearing her throat, she resumed fussing needlessly with the bed linens and pillows.

“You’re too kind. Now, I really must be going,” she muttered without meeting my eyes. “Please have the nurse alert me if he needs anything else today. Excuse me.”

Before I could formulate a response, Terra slipped past me and through the imposing doors in a flutter of white linen skirts. The hand that had clasped hers still tingled warmly. That simple contact had awakened our fractured bond, sending lightning arcing wildly across my skin, down to my very soul.

I feel this bind since I once laid my eyes on her. This great pull. Between us.

I brush it as my longing for her. But now that I touched her I can feel it.

She’s my second chance mate.

I’m forever grateful for the goddess for this.

But for some reason Terra didn’t seem to feel it too.

Could she not sense it the bond?

The inexorable link between us, molded by the goddess’s own hand, thrummed as painfully alive as the day fate tore us violently asunder.

How Terra remained oblivious to the magnetic pull even now trying to draw us back together, I could not fathom.

Somehow I must find the words to awaken her to this undeniable connection still kindling between us. But patience and care remained critical. I could not repeat old mistakes by demanding more from Terra than she was prepared to give.

This time I would let her warm to me again freely, on her own terms.

My instincts raged impatiently, urging me to simply sweep her into my embrace and rekindle our bond through possessive passion.

But rational thought prevailed. Forcing myself back on her too quickly, before trust rebuilt, would only drive Terra farther away.

I must restrain the wolfish impulses clamoring, however maddening their savage cravings grew as her scent faded.

His Rejected Mateless Luna Chapter 17

Terra

The scent of woodsmoke and crisp night air welcomed me as I slipped outside, escaping the estate's suffocating press of old ghosts and memories. My nerves sang with relief feeling open sky above instead of brooding antique woodwork and cloying velvet drapes shrouding the corridors.

I sank gratefully onto the worn garden bench tucked against the rear veranda, angled to overlook the moonlit forest rolling unbroken to the distant sawtooth mountains.

Out here I could breathe. The stifling weight of the past eased just slightly under vast stars winking down as they had my very first night fleeing this place heartbroken so long ago. Their celestial light remained untroubled by earthly turmoil.

How foolish I had been, believing myself free of this to willingly walking back into the lion's den. I should have outlived my usefulness, he would discard me as coldly

ent. One imploring word from Nathan, and here I was again, when his earnest vows were temporary manipulations. Once I before. I was a born fool for trusting any word from his lying lips.

A crushing wave of anger and anguish welled up, forcing hot tears that I dashed away fiercely. Crying over Nathan yet again only proved how pathetically my traitorous heart still beat for the wolf who had crushed it to pulp. No matter how I steeled my will, fury powerless against this inescapable bond once forged between us by the moon goddess herself.

But this time, I refused to crumble meekly at his feet and beg for scraps of affection. I had built a full, happy life that belonged wholly to me, no longer some alpha royalty's decorative trinket. The fierce independence I had clawed back from nothing meant more than any pretty words or promises.

Bootsteps scuffing the flagstones behind me made my shoulders tense instinctively. But I kept my voice cool as Nathan settled on the opposite end of the bench some distance away, intruding on my solitary peace yet again.

"Shouldn't you be inside tending your father?" I remarked dismissively, still facing the serene forest vista. The needling jab fell beneath my dignity, but rationality stood little chance against the churning emotions his looming presence stirred up now.

"He sleeps well, finally. Your treatments have been miraculous." Nathan's fervent tone held no trace of my own bitterness.

Couldn't he take a hint to leave me be? I bit back a scalding retort, still refusing to meet his emerald gaze head-on. Eye contact risked cracking my fragile composure. "Let's hope your appreciations lasts longer than a moon's turning this time," I replied thinly.

Nathan flinched subtly at the venomous barb. But his voice remained infuriatingly earnest and calm. "Terra, you have every right to your resentment. But I swear to you, I fully understand now the magnitude of my mistakes." He leaned forward imploringly. "Please, if you can just find any scrap of will to forgive-

The careful facade of control snapped fully. I jerked toward Nathan, anger blazing wildly through any caution or weariness. "Forgive?" My harsh, mocking laugh echoed across the empty gardens. "As if your pretty apologies can undo the damage once the deed is done."

Nathan's chiseled features contorted, seeming genuinely wounded. But I refused softening. He deserved to finally feel a fraction of the hurt inflicted callously on me years ago.

When he reached for my rigid hand, eyes beseeching, I s**d it back as if scalded. "Do not touch me," I hissed through clenched teeth. "Not unless you want me to remove that presumptuous paw." To underscore the threat, my fingernails lengthened subtly into razor-sharp claws, pale in the moonlight.

Nathan froze, searching my face warily. I held his stare with vicious satisfaction, letting him glimpse just a sliver of the rage constantly simmering beneath my fragile outward calm. The venomous monster he had awoken could not be so easily subdued. He had broken this woman, and now the jagged shards would tear him b**dy in retaliation.~

*Forgiveness cannot be demanded or forced,” I continued scathingly. “Only earned through real change. And considering we sit here again despite harsh lessons once taught...” I trailed off pointedly.

When Nathan remained silent, I pushed myself to my feet, brushing off my skirts with jerky motions. A reckless urge to hurt and provoke him further goaded me despite all reason.

“In fact, since you seem to suffer memory lapses, let me make myself plain,” I goaded, leaning down toward Nathan with bared teeth. “Nothing could induce me to accept a place here again, least of all the company of a proven scoundrel and liar.”

With acidic satisfaction I watched the barb strike home, Nathan’s broad shoulders sagging under the weight of hatred. But an instant later he rallied, defiance glittering in his forest-colored eyes.

my unveiled

“Call me what names you wish,” he rumbled quietly. “The goddess herself bound us eternally. I have faith one day you will recognize that truth again.” His piercing gaze turned wretchedly hopeful. “This chill between us cannot endure forever.”

I reeled as though he had struck me a physical blow. How dare this arrogant beast fling our supposed sacred bond in my face after breaking me so cruelly? As if holy assignment could erase the damage once ruthlessly inflicted? My hand flew up cheek in a spray of blood.

without thought, whip-cracking across Nathan’s ch

“You made your choice long ago,” I snarled, anguished tears finally escaping down my flushed face, “Now live with the bitter fruits reaped from seeds sown in thoughtless haste.”

I spun away before Nathan could respond, fleeing into the yawning woods to outrun the tempest churning within. His stunned silhouette quickly disappeared behind the thick curtain of trees. But I could not escape the aching bond between us, throbbing relentlessly as I crashed heedlessly through the forest, wolf claws tearing brutally through underbrush.

I ran full out beneath the effusive moonlight until I thought my burning lungs might rupture, or my hammering heart c**k my ribs. Still the restless fury and pain churned on. At last I collapsed panting in a secluded glen, muscles quaking violently from overexertion.

If only physical collapse could also quiet my relentlessly whirling thoughts. Exhaustion slowly claimed my bruised and aching body. But even delirious with fatigue, my

traitorous heart clung to fragile hopes kindled anew under. Nathan's ardent gaze these past days together.

Much as I despised myself for it, perhaps a buried part of my spirit had recognized our fractured bond flaring potent as ever, despite all I sacrificed to leave the naive girl who loved him unquestioningly behind so long ago.

When silver light filtering down through rustling leaves finally woke me, I sat up with a groan, every inch of my battered

had body protesting. I felt even hollower and more unrested than before collapsing into dead slumber. But fiery anger burned out, leaving only an ashy weariness and lingering heartache in its wake.

Slowly I gathered the tattered remains of my dignity and shifted into human form, grimacing as dried blood and dirt flaked off torn skin already knitting itself back together. The evidence of my reckless rage made shame swarm hotly. Lashing out accomplished nothing worthwhile.

I must master my wayward temper, or risk weakening my own hard-won independence even further.

Clean clothes awaited me in my meticulously prepared suite when I crept back inside just as rosy dawn blushed across the estate's stony battlements.

The courtesy irked me further-I wanted no comforts or benevolence from Nathan's hand. But after washing off grime and the last clinging tendrils of fury in a scalding shower, the soft warm bed was too tempting to resist collapsing into for a few fitful hours of rest.

"Hello, Dr Wolfe, sorry to disturb your period time."

Kawoke to insistent knocking, followed by Derek's rumbling voice announcing through the heavy oak door that the Alpha required my presence downstairs.

"Coming. Just a minute." I bit back the caustic refusal poised on my tongue. Exchanging petty cruelties solved nothing. If I could behave civilly, Nathan, would have minimal excuses to prolong our acquaintance once I finished caring for his father.

The hulking beta's shrewd gaze took in my wan, drawn appearance as I emerged. But he made no comment, merely gestured me politely toward the stairwell down to the great hall where Nathan waited.

I ignored my own haggard reflection in the gilt mirrors lining the elegant corridor. Appearances hardly signified between us anymore. All artifice had burned away, leaving only simmering bitterness and regret exposed.

Upon entering the imposing hall, my eyes fell immediately to the garish parallel scars slashing Nathan's angular cheek, still raw and crimson. I froze, hit anew by the shameful reality of my own viciousness.

However justified my festering rage, succumbing to base violence made me no better than the cruelest alphas I had endured growing up powerless and vulnerable.

His Rejected Mateless Luna Chapter 18

Terra

Golden dawn light filtering into the solarium made the crystal vials on my worktable glint and shimmer beautifully. But the radiance only darkened my brooding mood further. I should be feeling accomplished finalizing treatment plans today, my task here nearly complete.

Instead, melancholy clung more suffocating than the estate's heavy velvet drapes. Each day brought me nearer to farewells I now dreaded making, despite resolve setting me on this course.

A brisk knock interrupted my gloomy thoughts. At my call to enter, Derek stepped inside. I frowned slightly, registering his stiff posture and concerned frown. Something more than routine summons had brought him here.

He ran a hand through his cropped hair, seeming uncharacteristically

"My apologies for disturbing you, Miss Terra." agitated. "But your...assistance...is required rather urgently."

I tensed, chest constricting. Given the unspoken tension since my violent outburst, only one dire situation would warrant my direct aid. "What happened? Where is he?" Fear made my words snap out tersely.

Derek's craggy features softened somewhat in pity. "The Alpha is resting securely in his quarters and his life in no immediate peril. But he was set upon by a rogue wolf in the southern forests at dawn. He has wounds..."

My vision briefly swam with images of deep g**s leaking ruby blood, Nathan's bronzed skin rent irreparably. But I shook off the visceral panic, forcing steadiness into my voice.

"What is the problem, then? Surely your other healers can easily tend minor combat injuries. I need not interfere." Nathan's close brush with death frightens me, but he had made clear my cordial distance was preferred now. I would adhere to his wishes, however it wrenched my heart.

Derek sighed heavily. “Yes, his injuries alone are superficial enough, with time and care. But he refuses any treatment or company except yours. For two days prior he had fallen into bleak moods, spending long hours alone outdoors. I fear...losing himself. ” Derek’s grave tone conveyed layers I could only dimly interpret.

But stark enough meaning came through – Nathan endangering his own life recklessly because of our ruined connection. This was on my shoulders, regardless of old resentment.

“Take me to him. Now.” All pretense at indifference vanished. Nathan needed me, and my healer’s oaths would not let harm come to any patient, whatever our past. I gathered my bag of equipment, signaling briskly for Derek to show the way.

We hurried through dim corridors until the beta halted before an ornately carved set of double doors. “I will stand watch out here, to ensure complete privacy,” Derek rumbled. His knowing look brought inconvenient heat to my cheeks.

Of course he scented the turbulent emotions churning between his leader and I. Little could be hidden from an attentive beta’s nose.

Squaring my shoulders, I banished useless embarrassment and pushed inside without knocking. This was no mere social call. Nathan’s wellbeing hung precipitously in the balance. I could mend old wounds between us later. First, the fresh b**dy ones demanded urgency.

The expansive bedchamber was all shadows, drapes drawn tightly over the midmorning sunlight. My eyes adjusted quickly, werewolf vision needing little help distinguishing Nathan’s hulking silhouette sprawled facedown across the massive four- poster bed.

Crimson-soaked bandages wrapped his broad chest and shoulder, reeking of sweat and infection. He did not stir as I approached on whisper-soft feet, hot dread congealing in my throat.

“Nathan?” My tentative call produced only a faint groan in response. Heart hammering, I perched on the bed’s edge, leaning

close to lay my palm gently across his clammy brow. Fever raged beneath his skin, though he shuddered violently as if icy.

“You foolish, reckless wolf,” I whispered despairingly. Why allow his wounds to fester untreated this long, out of stubborn pride? I thought we had moved past such senseless self-punishment. But recriminations could wait – if I did not act swiftly, they soon would not matter.

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With ruthless efficiency I unpacked herbs, bandages and instruments, preparing poultices and tonics beside the bedstand. When all was laid out, I steeled myself for the most unsettling task cutting away Nathan's fetid dressing to fully expose the wounds. His skin would shred further under the embedded cloth. I bowed my head, gathering courage. Forgive me, my love. This first part will hurt bitterly. But then we will heal.

The crusted cloth peeled back agonizingly slowly as I worked, muttering constant apologies Nathan could not hear in his feverish limbo. But the hot tears tracking my cheeks were not all from navigating the raw epithet of emotions seeing him thus laid low. Rage burned equally scalding. How could he disregard his own life and pack so callously, denying himself care out of prideful spite?

I wanted to shake and slap sense back into his reckless hide.

At last the winding strips fell away, baring Nathan's torn shoulder and the angry curving ga**s etching his ribs. Blood still oozed sluggishly from the deepest crevices. I stifled a horrified sob, hands fluttering uselessly in the air over mutilated bronze skin I had caressed so gently what seemed mere days ago.

"Goddess save you, you stubborn brute," I choked out through tears. "Just let me help, stop all this wretched torment..." Emotion strangled the plea off. However bitter our parting, seeing proud strong Nathan brought so low was anguish beyond any boiling anger.

I needed him vital and whole again, or the sun's very light would go out leaving only cold darkness behind. We had found each other again against impossible odds. I could not – would not – lose him like this.

Jaw clenched with resolve, I wiped my face fiercely and took up a sterilized cloth, ready to cleanse the wounds in preparation for stitching. But at the first stinging touch, Nathan jerked and growled, lashing out instinctively with a powerful fist that caught my shoulder solidly in his delirium.

I reeled back, tasting coppery blood from a bitten cheek. Nathan's eyes were open, flashing gold and crimson with animal panic, muscles tensed to keep me at bay – or attack again if provoked. My heart cracked further. Even lost in nightmares, some dark part of his spirit believed I meant harm, not healing. My own rampant fury had seeded such distrust between us.

Cradling my throbbing shoulder, I met his wild stare steadily, keeping still as carved marble. "Hush, it's alright," I soothed in a low murmur. "Just me, only Terra. You're safe here." Desperation bled through my fragile calm.

Slowly the scarlet receded from Nathan's eyes, leaving them glassy and bewildered as fever's grip relaxed briefly. "...Terra?" His cracked lips fumbled over my name slurred and rasping. "You came back..."

Before delirium could reclaim him, I seized the chance to begin cleaning and stitching the ragged gashes with all the speed my nimble fingers allowed. Nathan lapsed in and out of coherence, sometimes cursing or weakly attempting to push me away before sinking under again. I kept up soothing, one-sided conversation, hoping my voice might calm whatever nightmares plagued him.

By late afternoon, the worst was remedied – wounds cleared of infection and sealed, tonics administered for pain and fever. Nathan had finally slipped into heavy but peaceful sleep. I perched stiffly at his bedside, using a cloth to gently blot up the medicinal ointments slathering his injury site.

Close, methodical contact was required to prevent any renewed bleeding or swelling.

But having license to freely run my hands over the sculpted planes of Nathan's chest sparked very different instincts than clinical necessity.

Under my ministering fingers, vivid sense memories stirred of learning his magnificent body thoroughly with eager mouth and hands on that single stolen night of passion. When ruin between us still seemed unthinkable.

Shame scalded my face at such untoward thoughts given the circumstances. But the fevered dreams clearly addled me as much as infection did him. Being so near what had been briefly, gloriously mine was agony exquisite as it was bitter. The goddess's cruel design continued torturing us from just out of reach of what our linked hearts yearned for.

With a shaking breath, I forced my traitorous hands to straighten, task finished. I had no right to even distant memories of Nathan's intimacy anymore. We were little more than aloof acquaintances fumbling to navigate the jagged shards of a past that left no safe harbor for tender thought. I was a fool longing for more than his cold courtesy now.

Rinsing bloodied cloths efficiently in the basin helped settle my chaotic emotions again. Nathan remained deeply unconscious, features finally smoothed of their pained creases and pinches from hours previous. Some color had returned to his pallid face as well. He would recover now, given time. He needed only my patient care, not hopeless longing for renewed affections.

I lingered mutely at his bedside as rosy sunset gilded the ornate room around us. Part of me feared leaving him too soon, irrationally anxious he might slip away if not watched constantly. But weariness and sk**d meals weighted my shoulders until I reluctantly pushed stiffly to my feet. I could no more good bone-tired myself. His healing was firmly underway.

Unable to resist, I gently swept a few errant raven strands off Nathan's forehead before turning toward the door and whatever fitful rest awaited me. But quick fingers suddenly clasped weakly around my wrist, rooting me in place.

I glanced back to see Nathan watching me through half-lidded eyes, their forest green now clear and lucid again. My name rasped from his parched throat as his grip tightened like a man desperate never to be left behind.

“Please...stay.”

The simple entreaty held such fathomless vulnerability. My hasty exit stalled out, feet betraying the warnings screeching in my head to keep aloofness firmly intact between us now. I wavered helplessly under his earnest gaze. Here, witnessing Nathan’s harrowing brush with death, caution seemed only another species of cowardice. And despite fresh scars lancing my soul, I had never been craven where this wolf was concerned.

Heart stuttering unevenly, I perched on the bed’s edge once more. Nathan watched intently as I lifted the cup of waiting water to his cracked lips, helping him drink deeply of the soothing draught. When he finished a grateful sigh escaped his chest, breath washing warm over my wrist, sending sparks skittering up my arm. Even bandaged and bedridden, his presence intoxicated dangerously.

I should say something – make brisk excuses, check his healing progress clinically and withdraw again behind fortified walls. That would be wisest. But my tongue remained frozen as uncertainty flickered across Nathan’s chiseled features.

When I made no move to pull away again, he tentatively reclaimed my hand resting atop the quilts, enveloping my cold fingers in his feverish grip. The tender clasp anchored me through a swirling vertigo of emotions too intense to name.

For once in the exhausting years apart, the path forward felt unclouded. Here together was where we were always meant to stand, whatever stern trials shook and battered our entwined fates along the way. I only had to be brave enough to remain exactly where the goddess herself directed at this wolf’s side.

Wordlessly I stretched my free hand to gently brush Nathan’s tangled hair back, an infinitely tender gesture between careworn souls who had endured all earthly torments together and somehow emerged wiser.

His eyes slid shut under my ministering touch, body subtly angling closer like a flower bending gratefully toward the sun. Hope timidly unfurled its delicate shoots between us. Whatever black storms tomorrow held in store, tonight we had found our way home at long last.

His Rejected Mateless Luna Chapter 19

Terra

The morning sun streamed in through the open window, warming my face and coaxing me gently awake. I stretched lazily under the plush down comforter before rolling over to check the time. Nearly nine o'clock already.

After the long night attending to Nathan, I had slept like the dead.

Speaking of Nathan, I should check in on his recovery. I slipped out from under the covers and shuffled over to peer out the window overlooking the central gardens.

Sure enough, I spotted a familiar tall, broad-shouldered figure slowly pacing the graveled path below. Even injured, Nathan was never one to stay idle in bed.

I shook my head in amusement and slight exasperation at his stubbornness. At least the limp in his stride seemed less pronounced than yesterday.

After quickly washing and braiding back my unruly waves, I threw on soft jeans and a rose peasant blouse before making my way to the east wing kitchens.

The sprawling mansion was largely deserted this Sunday morning. With Nathan on the mend, most of the bustling pack members and staff had gladly seized the rare chance for a slower start to the day.

I found Elder Vera sipping tea at the worn oak table in the cheerful kitchen. She arched an elegantly greying eyebrow at my arrival, but her eyes were warm.

"There you are, child. Come sit and take tea." She waved me over imperiously. I hid a grin and obeyed. After Nathan's injury, Vera's seemed to have decided my presence was now completely accepted, if not openly acknowledged. Derek likely informed her privately that I had come at Nathan's urgent request.

"Did you sleep alright?" Lianna asked casually as I doctored my tea. Her sharp gaze took in the lingering shadows under my eyes. Little got past her notice.

I smiled reassuringly. "Well enough, thank you. Just up late tending to a difficult patient."

Lianna nodded sagely at my discrete allusion. "Yes, he has always been stubborn as oak about admitting vulnerabilities, even to those only wishing to help." Her voice held exasperated affection. She busied herself preparing a plate of scones and fruit, signaling the subtle subject was closed.

I bit into the fluffy raspberry scone, savoring this moment of uncomplicated compassion. Whatever Nathan's old bitterness had dictated about my place here, Lianna clearly bore me no ill will. I was thankful at least one wolf might recall me fondly when I soon departed again.

We passed another half hour chatting lightly about easier topics before Lianna insisted on sending me off with an enormous basket of pastries and fresh vegetables from the garden. I protested weakly, but her word was law in this domain. Laden with delectable offerings, I returned to my room to check on messages before heading into town for the first time in ages.

Derek's note from yesterday explained Nathan remained stable but should avoid strenuous activity for another week minimum. I penned a quick affirmative, feeling immense relief his recovery progressed well. The ordeal had unearthed more complex feelings between Nathan and I than I could wrestle with presently. For now, his improving health was all that mattered.

I rifled through my suitcase to take inventory of what items I needed to resupply during my outing. Toothpaste, shampoo, hair ties...the collection of everyday essentials sparked bittersweet nostalgia.

How quickly mundane human concerns had come to seem foreign after just a few weeks immersed wholly in the hidden supernatural world again. My two lives stood divided by a gulf I could never share or reconcile fully with anyone. The familiar isolation settled leaden across my shoulders.

But wallowing changed nothing. I buckled on my ankle boots decisively and headed for the sleek black sedan Derek arranged for my discreet use weeks earlier. Time I became acquainted with this village I had known only distantly growing up. Maybe exploring its changed streets would help clear the melancholy fog gathering in my mind.

I took the winding side lanes rather than the main packed highway into town, enjoying the scenery gradually transforming from dense woods to scattered homesteads and shops. The quaint downtown looked relatively unchanged from my vague childhood memories – stone buildings with brightly painted shutters and window boxes overflowing with cheery flowers. What I recalled as a modest general store now appeared to be a bustling café and bakery. And gaggles of teenagers crowded the sidewalks, likely refugees from their humdrum school day in search of excitement.

After poking through some artisan craft shops and selecting herbs from a fragrant apothecary, my growling stomach reminded me I had forgotten about lunch. The cozy café I passed earlier beckoned. A hearty sandwich and escape from the mild autumn chill sounded perfect about now.

Settling in a corner table with my meal, I was at once people-watching through the wide window when a familiar laugh nearby made me start. My eyes snapped to the checkout counter where a petite woman with a sleek gold bob stood chatting warmly with the cashier.

Lilly.

We had been friends since her family moved to a bordering pack territory when we were twelve. Inseparable for those few precious years we shared before my sudden devastating departure. My heart clenched, a dozen tangled emotions hitting at once. Should I slip out before she noticed me? The risk of reigniting questions was steep. But neither could I dash away from my dearest friend without a word.

I sat paralyzed by indecision until Lilly happened to glance my way mid-laugh. Our eyes locked. Time froze as her jaw went slack in disbelief. Then her face split into an ecstatic grin and she rushed over, tackling me in a jubilant hug before I could react. I couldn't help smiling and embracing her tightly back, tension melting away. No pretense or evasion could withstand Lilly's uncomplicated delight at our reunion.

"Terra, I can't believe it! You're really here?" She pulled back to study me, amber eyes welling with happy tears. "We were told you had moved far away after..." She trailed off awkwardly.

I squeezed her hands, brushing past the painful subject. "I know, it's been ages. I'm sorry I disappeared without a word."

Lilly waved a hand dismissively, sunny nature rebounded already. "Oh please, we were teenagers, everything was always so dramatic. I'm just thrilled to see you now!"

Her ready forgiveness loosened the guilty knot in my chest. Impulsive as ever, she began tugging me toward the door. "Forget my boring errands. Let's go catch up properly!"

Allowing myself to simply enjoy the surprise reunion, I let Lilly pull me down the quaint streets under gold-dappled trees, chatting a mile a minute about everything and nothing. The years apart melted away swiftly, our conversation settling into easy familiar rhythms. With Lilly's bubbly presence beside me again, the desolation plaguing my thoughts earlier seemed to lift. I had nearly forgotten how steadying her exuberant friendship felt.

We meandered down to the rocky riverbank on the village outskirts, climbing onto a flat sunny ledge overlooking the gentle rapids. Lilly produced a bag of candy from her purse, and we munched contentedly, savoring the tranquil scene.

After we had discussed jobs and hobbies and mutual acquaintances, a thoughtful silence fell for several minutes. I could sense the conversation shifting before Lilly spoke again softly.

"I know there's probably so much you still can't explain about why you left. But I hope you know you can trust me. I'm just happy to see you smiling again."

I swallowed the lump in my throat, blinking back sudden tears at her empathy. Impulsively I pulled her into another fierce hug. I've missed you, Lil. Thank you for understanding."

She hugged me back just as tightly. Finally I pulled away, wiping my eyes while we both laughed. The conversation moved on to lighter topics again. We passed a perfectly sunny afternoon talking and tossing pebbles into the rippling river until the lowering sun reminded me I should return before long shadows caused talk.

Lilly walked me back to my car, already chattering about plans to meet again soon. "Maybe I'll even drag you to do one of those new aerial yoga classes with me! No more disappearing allowed," she teased.

I grinned and promised to text her soon, buoyed by rediscovering this unexpected pocket of joy in my complicated visit home. As I drove back through the fiery autumn woods, some of the despondency from earlier had thankfully lifted. Healing the rift with Nathan would take time and continued care. But having Lilly's sunny friendship again made the path ahead seem not so lonely.

When I pulled up the mansion's winding drive some time later, Nathan himself sat waiting on the wide stone steps, elbows braced casually on his knees. His keen eyes tracked my approach.

I suppressed a rueful smile as I slid from the driver's seat. Even recovering from injury, he remained the vigilant sentry, scanning for potential threats. Old habits died h specially for seasoned Alphas.

"Checking up on me?" I asked lightly as I reached him. "I promise I did not steal away again permanently. Just needed some air."

Green flashed in Nathan's gaze. "Merely concerned when you vanished without notice. Unwise to go unescorted given lingering tensions."

I arched an eyebrow. "What tensions exactly? I cannot live under perpetual guard."

Nathan's stern expression wavered. He looked aside. "You are right, of course. I only meant..." His broad shoulders rose and fell with a resigned sigh. "You deserve freedom without stifling worry. But promise you'll tell someone next time?"

My defensiveness faded seeing real care, not just Alpha protectiveness, in his shadowed eyes. Nathan had lost me unexpectedly once before. My disappearing sparked understandable fear now. I rested a gentle hand on his shoulder.

"You're still healing. Don't take on every burden alone. But yes, I'll let Derek know if I leave again so you won't fret."

Nathan's mouth quirked in a reluctant half smile at my teasing tone. He shifted as if to stand, but I pressed him back firmly.

"Don't even think of getting up yet. I'll make sure to tell Derek to send to bring you dinner out here." Before he could argue I whisked inside, hiding my own small smile.

Under the gruff commands, his true nature endured – a guardian to his very core. The realization softened something jagged within me.

This glimpsed new chance to appreciate each other's steady spirits felt a fragile gift. One I would nurture as best I could in the unpredictable days still ahead.

I curse myself for always having a soft spot for him. mostly now that he got hurt because of me.

His Rejected Mateless Luna Chapter 20

Terra

For the past days Lily has been taking me out, catching on old times.

Like yesterday we went out today too.

The setting sun cast an ethereal golden glow across the sky as Lilly and I strolled slowly back into town after our fun-filled day together.

Despite the autumn evening chill setting in, warmth blossomed in my chest. Spending these precious hours with my dearest friend again after so long apart felt like a gift.

Lilly chattered away happily, filling me in on listen, interjecting now and then with a lighthearted mood.

atest happenings around town and her family. I was content to simply question. Being around her lively, upbeat spirit never failed to lift my own

As we ambled down the quiet lamp-lit streets, our conversation drifted to reminiscing about carefree childhood adventures we once shared.

Like the summer we were convinced we could fly, so we climbed up on the barn roof with makeshift feathered wings tied on. Thank the goddess our foolish eight-year-old selves only ended up with bruises when we leapt off! We nearly cried laughing now recalling our shocked faces as the ground rushed up to meet us.

Oh, we got into such mischief back then, Lilly said, wiping her eyes. "But every crazy story just made us closer."

I looped my arm through hers affectionately. "It certainly did. I'm so thankful fate brought us back together now, Lil"

Her expression turned thoughtful. "Me too. I know it was hard when you had to...leave. But I want you to know I never judged you for it, hon. I'm just happy to have my sister back."

Unexpected tears p**d my eyes. Knowing Lilly didn't harbor any resentment over my sudden disappearance all those years ago lifted a weight from my shoulders I had carried far too long

"Thank you for understanding" I said thickly. "Your friendship means the world to me."

Lilly squeezed my hand. "The past is past. All that matters now is making up for lost time!" Her infectious grin chased away the melancholy threatening to settle over me. Lisking her arm through mine again, Lilly launched enthusiastically into detailing ideas for our next outing.

As we strolled along the dimly lit streets, Lilly couldn't help but probe into Nathan's love life, a subject I ardently avoided. "Why don't you want to know about harm and fade" she questioned her eyes glinting with curiosity.

I chuckled, "Because ignorance is bliss, my dear Lilly. I'd rather not unravel the intricacies of his romantic entanglements."

"But, Terra" she persisted, after Jade left, he never pursued any love interest. It's strange, don't you think?

I sighed, knowing Lilly wouldn't let it go. "What's the catch then?" I asked, half expecting a juicy revelation.

Lilly grinned mischievously. "Jade was never in love with him. She took the Luna position to secure power after her pack was annihilated Cold-hearted if you ask me."

I furrowed my brow, absorbing the unexpected twist. So, she betrayed him?"

Lilly nodded. "Big time. She rejected him to be with another Alpha. They ran away together, leaving Nathan broken."

I couldn't brip but feel a pang of sympathy for Nathan All theseyears, I thought he had everything-power lume, a p

Little did I know, he was hurting, carrying the weight of betrayal on his shoulders.

As Lilly continued unraveling the tale of Jade's deceit, I couldn't shake the feeling that Nathan's wounds ran deeper than anyone realized. Perhaps, he was still healing from the scars Jade left on his heart.

The next day too. We walk together as the setting sun cast an ethereal glow as Lilly and I walked home after a fun day out. Spending time with my dearest childhood friend filled me with warmth, despite the evening autumn chill.

Lilly chattered happily about local happenings while I listened contently. Our conversation soon drifted to fond memories of youthful misadventures that bonded us for life.

I recalled how we once tied feathers to our arms and jumped off the barn roof, genuinely believing we could fly. Of course we ended up with bruises, but also an unbreakable connection.

"We really were rascal kids, weren't we?" Lilly d, laughing. Hooped my arm through hers affectionately. "It certainly brought us closer. I'm so grateful we reconnected, Lil."

Her expression turned thoughtful. "Me too. I know it was hard when you left town. But I never judged you, hon. I'm just thankful to have my sister back in my life."

Unexpected tears p**d my eyes hearing her unconditional love. "Thank you. Your friendship means everything to me."

We spent the rest of the walk enthusing about future plans together. By the time we reached my cottage, my cheeks ached from smiling. Rediscovering Lilly's companionship filled the lonely void in my heart and made this town feel more like home.

I said a warm goodnight as Lilly headed cheerfully down the street. Stepping inside my cozy cottage, contentment washed over me. The bittersweet ache of Nathan's absence would always linger. But Lilly's steadfast friendship was helping me move forward. For now, that felt like blessing enough.

I went home with a heavy heart.

My mind wandered to the surprising revelations Lilly shared about Nathan's failed marriage.

According to her, Nathan's mate Jade betrayed him soon after their union, running off with another wolf. The whole truth of what happened remained murky.

But clearly much more lurked beneath the surface than I realized. Despite everything, hearing of Nathan's suffering sparked sympathy inside me. I hoped someday we might find closure, if not renewed connection. With a heavy heart I went to sleep.

I was walking home alone and I lost in thought, I nearly collided with a lone figure standing beneath a glowing lamppost ahead. My heart jolted as we locked eyes. Nathan. After so many years apart, this chance encounter seemed fated.

“Terra...” My name rumbled softly from his lips. “Might we talk?”

I hesitated, pulse racing. But something in his vulnerable expression called to me. I nodded slowly. “Alright. Let’s walk together awhile.”

We set off side by side down the winding path. At first only our footsteps broke the heavy silence. Finally Nathan spoke. “I know you’ve built a new life here now. I don’t wish to complicate that.” He paused, emotion rippling across his face. “But I want you to understand how much I regret the hurt I caused you, all those years ago.”

I listened intently as we walked, sensing the depth of anguish his proud spirit had long been forced to bear alone. My own lingering anger toward Nathan softened. Perhaps it was time we both found closure through open conversation and forgiveness.

The full moon cast a serene light to guide us as we continued slowly onward. Many hard truths still lay between us. But for now, taking these first healing steps together felt like progress enough.

I wake up to the lone tear sliding down my eyes. It was just a dream but I wish to give him a easy life that we both wished for.

I never thought he was struggling too.

I stepped out of bed, sighing contentedly. The ache of Nathan’s past would likely always be with me on some level. But rediscovering Lilly’s steadfast friendship helped fill the lonely void in my heart, making my new independent life here feel more like home.

I sent up a quick prayer of thanks to the go for allowing our paths to cross again so unexpectedly.

The future remained uncertain, but with Lilly’s sunshine back in my life, I looked forward to each new day rather than simply enduring them. For now, that felt like blessing enough.