

## His Rejected Mateless Luna Chapter 3

### An unexpected blessing

Terra

The aroma of roasted coffee beans threatened to make me nauseous again as I wiped down the gleaming espresso machine. I took slow, deep breaths, willing my rolling stomach to settle. The last thing I needed was to throw up on the job. Again.

“Terra, can you buss table nine?” my manager Sandy called.

I grabbed a bin and cloth and hurried over, clearing away the dirty mugs and plates. The couple sitting there kept shooting me strange looks. I probably had dark circles under my eyes again. Sleep hadn’t come easy these past two months. Not with the gaping hole Nathan’s rejection had torn through me.

Finally my shift ended. I untied my apron wearily, dreading the long walk back to my makeshift den in the woods. The tiny studio apartment above the cafe was far beyond my meager paycheck.

“Here’s your pay, hun. And I put in a little extra.” Sandy pressed an envelope into my hand. “You’ve been looking really rundown. Go treat yourself to a checkup, okay?”

I mustered a grateful smile. “Thanks Sandy. I’ll do that.” Extra cash meant I could finally find out why I’d been so nauseous and fatigued lately. Probably just stress, but it was better to know for sure.

The town clinic was empty when I arrived. One perk of living in a remote mountain village—no long waits to see the doctor. I checked in at the front desk, and a nurse led me to an exam room to take my vitals.

“The doctor will be right with you,” she said with a friendly smile.

I perched stiffly on the exam table in my paper gown, crinkling the sanitary paper obsessively. Apprehension knotted my stomach. Medical care wasn’t something I’d ever had access to growing up. But whatever was going on, I was grateful to finally get some answers.

A brisk knock preceded the entrance of a tall, handsome man in a white coat. He looked barely older than me, with kind amber eyes behind stylish glasses.

“Terra?” he asked, glancing down at his chart. When I nodded, he extended his hand. “I’m Dr. Collins, nice to meet you.”

His warm smile and firm handshake eased some of my nerves. I tried not to stare as he asked questions and jotted down notes. The town gossip mill had mentioned how young and attractive the new doctor was, but I hadn't expected him to be this cute. A distracting observation, given my *raison d'être* here was medical, not social.

Dr. Collins put down his clipboard and pulled on some gloves. "So what's been going on? Any worrying symptoms?"

"I've just been really nauseous and tired lately," I explained. "And sometimes lightheaded. I thought it was stress at first, but it's been over two weeks now."

He nodded, brow furrowing slightly. "And when was your last menstrual cycle?"

I blinked. I'd been so consumed with heartbreak that I hadn't even realized I'd missed my period. Twice, apparently.

"Oh. Um, actually I don't remember," I admitted. "It's been a while."

Dr. Collins gave me an assessing look. "Okay, a pregnancy test seems prudent. We'll take some blood for that."

He drew a vial of blood, then left me alone to process this shocking development. Pregnant? It hadn't even occurred to me, since Nathan and I had only been together once. But timing-wise, it was possible. Barely.

Panic crept up my throat. Pregnant? Me? I was in no position to care for a child, metaphorically or literally. But terminating the pregnancy wasn't an option either. This was a piece of Nathan growing inside me, one I wouldn't give up, no matter how things had ended between us.

A knock jarred me from my racing thoughts. Dr. Collins stepped back in, an odd expression on his face. Oh goddess, it must be positive.

"Well, Terra, it seems congratulations are in order," he said gently. "You're going to have a baby."

Even expected, the news was a blow. I sat stunned as Dr. Collins talked about prenatal vitamins and follow-up care. A baby. Nathan's baby. Joy and despair crashed together inside me, unable to reconcile.

I left the clinic in a daze, Dr. Collins' business card with the scribbled due date clutched in my hand. September 18. The child that had been nothing more than a wispy daydream a few hours ago now tethered me to reality.

My steps slowed as I passed an apartment building advertising vacancies. A child needed a home. But even the cheap studios were far beyond my budget. Just one more reminder of how unprepared I was for this enormous responsibility.

Overwhelmed, I sank onto a bus stop bench and finally let the tears fall. Fat drops splashed onto my jeans, soaking the worn fabric. Passersby shot me concerned glances, but no one stopped. I was alone. Again. Only this time, I wasn't alone.

As afternoon faded into evening, the April chill deepened. I knew I should shift and head back to my den in the woods. But I couldn't summon the energy to move.

What kind of life could I even give this child? We would be nomads, always on the fringes, not belonging anywhere. Unwanted. It wasn't fair to bring an innocent baby into such uncertainty.

The click of expensive shoes on pavement drew my gaze up. Dr. Collins stood before me, frown lines creasing his brow.

"Terra? Are you all right?" he asked. "I was just heading to my car when I saw you."

I roughly wiped my eyes, humiliation flooding me. The last thing I wanted was for the only friendly person here to realize what a mess I was.

"I'm fine, thanks," I mumbled. "Just had a long day. I should get going."

I stood hastily, but a wave of dizziness washed over me. Dr. Collins grasped my arm, steadying me. His hands were warm, the grip solid.

"Let me drive you home," he said. "You're in no shape to walk anywhere right now."

Home. I nearly laughed. The dark, dirt-floored cave at the edge of the woods that served as my den didn't qualify as home. But I couldn't very well lead this kind doctor there.

"I'm really okay," I insisted with what I hoped passed for a reassuring look. "Don't worry about me."

Dr. Wells crossed his arms, clearly unconvinced. "Terra, you're pregnant and need looking after. Especially in your condition." His eyes softened with concern. "Please, let me help."

My protests died under that sincere gaze. The offer was tempting, a chance to pretend someone cared, just for a moment. Even if it meant lying.

"Well...if you're sure it's no trouble," I said finally.

“None at all.”

I followed him to a practical hatchback sedan. The clean interior and neatly organized space contrasted sharply with my own disarrayed life. We drove in silence for a few minutes before Dr. Collins spoke.

“I know we just met, so feel free to tell me to mind my business,” he began. “But is there someone you can talk to about all this? The father, or family?”

I looked down, shame flooding me. He must think I was pathetic, getting knocked up by some deadbeat who left me. If only he knew the truth.

“There’s no one,” I said quietly.

Concern radiated from Dr. Collins’ thoughtful silence. I felt tears threatening again. Kindness from a stranger shouldn’t undo me like this. I turned to look out the window so he wouldn’t see.

“Family doesn’t always mean blood relatives, you know,” he said after a minute. “If you need help, you have people in your corner.”

I nodded without replying, not trusting my voice. We had reached the edge of town, the shops and houses thinning out.

“You can let me off here,” I said hastily as we approached the woods. Dr. Collins frowned but pulled over.

“Are you sure you’ll be all right?” he asked.

“Yes, I’ll be fine now. Thank you.” I forced a smile.

Dr. Collins looked unconvinced, but he didn’t press further. “Take care of yourself, Terra. Call if you need anything.” He handed me his card again.

“I will,” I promised. “You’re very kind to help a stranger this way.” I hoped he could read the sincere gratitude in my eyes.

He gave my shoulder a gentle squeeze. “You take care now.”

I watched his taillights disappear down the street before shifting into my wolf and slipping into the dark forest. Back to my lonely camp, and an uncertain future.

But tonight, the memory of Dr. Collins’ compassion would be my blanket as I fell into uneasy dreams about the new life growing inside me. A little piece of Nathan, lost to me now.

Could I find the strength to raise this child alone?