

7 THE APEX LUNA

Wren POV

I wake up screaming.

My hands are clawing at invisible attackers, fighting off Dax's fists, Flynn's fire, Kade's cruel words. But when my eyes finally focus, I'm not in the basement. I'm not bleeding on the forest floor.

I'm in a bed.

An actual bed with soft sheets and warm blankets and a pillow that doesn't smell like mold and blood. The room is bright with morning sunlight streaming through windows. Real windows, not the tiny crack in the basement wall I used to count days by.

This has to be a dream. Or a trick. Or I died in the forest and this is whatever comes after.

"Easy there," a woman's voice says. "You're safe. I promise."

I turn my head so fast my neck cracks. A woman sits in a chair beside the bed—red hair, kind eyes, muscles that say she could snap me in half if she wanted. But her smile is gentle.

"I'm Piper," she says. "Beta Female of the Northern Crescent pack. How do you feel?"

How do I feel? I do a quick check of my body. My ribs don't hurt. The gash in my side is gone. Even the older scars feel... different. Faded.

"Healed," I whisper. "How long was I asleep?"

"Two days. Vera—our healer—worked on you pretty much nonstop. You were in bad shape." Piper leans forward. "Do you remember what happened?"

Everything floods back. The shift ceremony. My silver wolf. The three golden bonds connecting me to the triplets who hate me. Dax attacking. Running. Thorne carrying me across the border.

"I remember," I manage.

Inside my head, my wolf stirs. She's been quiet since we crossed the border, recovering from the shift and the blood loss. But now she stretches like she's waking up from a long nap.

Nyx, she says, and I realize that's her name. My wolf's name is Nyx.

"Your wolf awake?" Piper asks, like she can sense it.

"Yes. She says her name is Nyx."

Piper's grin gets bigger. "Good name. Strong name. Fits you."

"Nothing about me is strong," I say automatically.

Six years of being called weak, being treated like garbage, being reminded I'm nothing—it's hard to think any different.

"Yeah, about that." Piper stands and moves to open the curtains wider. "You've been lied to, sweetheart. For a long time. You're not weak. You're not omega. You're not defective."

I sit up slowly, testing my healed body. "Then what am I?"

"You're an Apex Luna."

The words don't make sense. "A what?"

"Apex Luna. Rarest wolf bloodline in existence. Blessed directly by the Moon Goddess." Piper counts on her fingers. "Only five have ever been recorded in all of werewolf history. They're born once every few centuries when the wolf world gets too corrupt, too violent, too broken. Their job is to balance everything out."

I stare at her. "You think I'm one of these... Apex things?"

"I don't think. I know. Vera confirmed it while you were sleeping. Your wolf is massive—way bigger than any normal female wolf. Your fur is pure silver, which is the Apex marker. And you shifted late at nineteen, which is exactly when Apex wolves emerge." Piper sits on the edge of the bed. "Normal wolves shift at thirteen

because they're still growing. Apex wolves wait until they're fully mature at nineteen because the power would destroy a younger body."

My head spins. "But I've been weak my whole life —"

"Because someone cursed you." Piper's voice gets hard. "Someone knew what you were, knew what you'd become, and they poisoned you to keep you weak. They delayed your shift, blocked your strength, made you think you were nothing so you'd never realize your potential."

The mate bonds in my chest suddenly pulse with pain. I gasp and grab my ribs even though there's no wound there anymore.

Piper notices. "The bonds are still active?"

"Yes. They keep pulling, trying to drag me back." I look at her desperately. "Why can they feel the bond but the triplets can't? That's not how mates work."

"Because the curse blocked their side of the bond. Probably the same person who cursed your shift." Piper's jaw tightens. "Someone wanted you to suffer alone, feeling a connection to mates who would never recognize you. Who would hurt you without knowing what you were to them."

Tears burn my eyes. "Who would do that?"



"Someone who feared what would happen if three Alpha heirs bonded with an Apex Luna. That's a power combination that could rule the entire East Coast." She pauses. "Or destroy it."

Before I can respond, the door opens. Thorne walks in carrying a tray of food, and my stomach immediately growls. I haven't eaten in... I don't even know how long.

"Good, you're awake," he says, setting the tray on my lap. "Eat. You need strength."

I stare at the food—real food, not scraps or leftovers or trash. Fresh bread. Meat. Fruit. Cheese. More food than I've seen in months.

"I can't eat all this," I whisper.

"Yes, you can. Your body is still healing. You need calories." Thorne pulls up another chair. "Piper told you what you are?"

I nod, taking a small bite of bread. It's the most delicious thing I've ever tasted. "She said I'm Apex Luna. But that's impossible. I'm nobody—"

"You're somebody now," Thorne interrupts firmly. "And we need to discuss why the Ravenscrests tried so hard to destroy you."

I eat while he talks, and Piper fills in details. They explain about Apex Lunas—how they're meant to unite fractured packs, how they can bond with

multiple Alphas to create alliances, how their power grows with age and training.

"The curse kept you weak," Thorne says. "But now that you've shifted, now that you're away from whoever was poisoning you, your true power will start emerging."

"How long will that take?"

"Weeks. Maybe months. Depends on how much damage the curse did." He leans forward. "But Wren, you need to understand something. When the Ravenscrests realize what you really are, they're going to want you back. Not to kill you—to control you."

The bread turns to ash in my mouth. "What do you mean?"

"An Apex Luna bonded to their three Alpha heirs would make the Ravenscrest pack unstoppable. Once the curse breaks completely and they feel the bond, they'll come for you." His ice-blue eyes are serious. "They'll try to force the bond, claim you, use your power for themselves."

"But they hate me," I protest. "They tortured me for six years—"

"They didn't know what you were. Now they do. Or they will soon." Thorne's voice softens slightly. "That's why you need to get strong. Strong enough to protect yourself. Strong

enough to choose your own path instead of having it forced on you."

I set down the bread, my appetite gone. "And what's your path? You want to use me for revenge against them."

"Yes," he admits. "But I also want to help you become who you're meant to be. Those two things don't have to be separate."

Piper snorts. "What he means is: train with us, get powerful, and then decide if you want to help us destroy the family that destroyed you. No pressure."

Despite everything, I almost smile. "That's a lot of pressure."

"You don't have to decide now," Thorne says. "Just focus on healing. On learning about your wolf. On—"

A loud howl cuts through the air—a warning from the border patrol.

Thorne is on his feet instantly, his whole body going tense. "That's the alarm. Someone's at our border."

Piper moves to the window and goes pale. "Oh shit."

"What?" Thorne demands.

"It's them. The Ravencrest triplets." She looks back at us. "All three of them. And they're demanding to see Wren."

My heart stops. The mate bonds in my chest explode with sensation—three connections all pulling tight at once, screaming that my mates are close, that I need to go to them.

But my mind screams the opposite. Run. Hide. They'll hurt you again.

"They can't come in," I say frantically. "Please, don't let them—"

"They're not coming in," Thorne promises. "But Wren... they're not alone."

"What do you mean?"

His expression is grim. "They brought Luna Saskia with them. And she's carrying something. A box wrapped in silver cloth."

Piper's face goes white. "That's a curse box. Shit, Thorne, she's the one who cursed Wren."

"We don't know that—"

"Why else would she bring a curse box to 'retrieve' an omega?" Piper snaps. "She's here to finish what she started!"

I can't breathe. Luna Saskia. The woman who's watched me suffer for six years with cold



satisfaction. The woman who told Dax to kill my wolf.

She cursed me. She's the reason I've been weak, broken, suffering. She's the reason my own mates don't recognize me.

And now she's here to finish the job.

Thorne's phone buzzes. He reads the message and his face hardens. "They're invoking pack law. Claiming you're stolen property. If we don't return you within the hour, they're declaring war."

The room spins. "You have to give me back. You can't start a war because of me—"

"I'm not giving you back," Thorne says flatly.

"But—"

"Wren." He kneels beside the bed, his eyes fierce. "You're under my protection. I don't care what they threaten. You're not going back to people who tortured you."

The mate bonds pulse again, stronger this time. Painful. Like they're trying to rip me in half.

And from the border, I hear a voice—Kade's voice, amplified by Alpha power, reaching across the entire territory:

"Wren! We know you're there! We know what

you are now! The curse is breaking—we can feel the bond! You're our mate! Come back! Please! We're sorry! We didn't know!"

My whole body freezes.

They feel it now. They know I'm their mate.

And they want me back.

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