

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna chapter 101-110

Chapter 101: Snap of the Crown

When we stopped, we were barely inches apart.

He looked down at me with a strange expression: soft, confused, haunted.

And then, he whispered my name.

"Vivian."

Just that. Just one word.

It was maddening how beautiful he could make my name sound, like it was the only word he cared to speak. But it wasn't enough. Not anymore.

I kept my face unreadable, though inside, every memory, every wound, threatened to rise. My voice, when I finally spoke, was steady but cold.

"Why?"

He flinched slightly, brows drawing in.

"I had to," he said quietly.

His hand started to lift, reaching for my cheek, but I blocked it before he could touch me. The near-contact sent a jolt through me, our bond reacting even when I didn't want it to.

His eyes darkened with pain, and his arm slowly dropped. He didn't argue. He just stood there, stiff and aching to reach for me again.

You don't get that right anymore, I reminded myself.

"You're the Lupus Deus," I said, my voice sharp and bitter. "You don't have to do anything."

His jaw clenched. "You were in danger. I had to act fast to protect you, your family. You think I wanted to keep you away? I couldn't let you be here until it was safe."

His voice deepened with that unshakable authority of his. But I wouldn't let his words break through my resolve.

No. I needed him soft. Vulnerable. Just like I was when he left.

I pressed my palm against his chest, right where his heart beat beneath muscle and power. He tensed beneath my touch, then slowly relaxed.

I softened my expression, just a little. Enough to lower his guard.

He reached out again, and this time, I let him. His fingers grazed my cheek, warm and tentative, like he didn't want to spook me. For that one second, I allowed myself to feel it: the closeness, the ache.

"I've missed you," he whispered, breath stirring the air between us. "My little cloud."

The nickname made something twist painfully in my chest.

I slid my hand up his chest, then the other, gently cupping his face. I pulled him closer, close enough for our lips to hover apart by only a breath. Rising up on my toes, I held his gaze.

And in a voice just as low, just as intimate, I answered.

"And I've missed you too," I murmured against his lips before pressing them softly to his. He moved with me, our kiss starting gentle, but heat quickly stirred beneath the surface. I matched his pace, letting myself melt into him, just for a moment. But before we lost ourselves completely, I pulled back with a sharp breath, brushing my thumbs across his jaw.

His eyes fluttered shut under my touch, leaning into me as if I were a safe place.

But I wasn't feeling merciful.

"I'm tired of your crap," I whispered.

And just as his eyes began to open, I snapped his neck.

The sound was sickening. His body crumpled instantly, dropping to the ground with a heavy thud. His skull hit the stone floor with a crack that made me flinch. I stood over him, heart steady despite what I'd done.

Well, there was no turning back now. The questions could wait. This part needed to be done.

Gasps broke around me like glass. I looked up, a sly smile teasing the corner of my lips.

"Oh shit!" Algebra yelped from a few feet away, his eyes bulging at the sight of Zaliver's limp form. I turned my gaze toward him, letting the smirk fade into something colder.

Behind him, the black Dodge Challenger stood like a silent witness. Inside, Luke and Johnson sat frozen, pale and wide-eyed.

"You two," I said calmly, "put him in the car."

They didn't move right away. When they finally did, it was slow, reluctant.

"B-but you killed him!" Johnson stammered, horror twisting his expression.

I rolled my eyes. "He's not dead. He's immortal, remember? If I had really killed him, the mate bond would have snapped, your wolves would have gone nuts. Do you feel that? No? Exactly."

With the toe of my boot, I nudged Zaliver's shoulder, rolling him onto his back. His shirt lifted slightly, revealing a sliver of skin that made something stir deep in my gut. I shoved the feeling down fast. This wasn't the time.

Everyone could see the way his chest still rose and fell. He looked... peaceful. Like he was napping through the worst betrayal of his life.

And when he woke up? Oh, he was going to be livid.

I had to act fast, no telling how quickly he could recover from a broken neck.

Luke and Johnson crept toward him with extreme caution, clearly hoping he wouldn't suddenly spring back to life. It didn't take long to realize they couldn't lift him on their own.

Two other bulky men stepped forward to help, but even with four of them, it wasn't easy. I itched to push them away, to pull Zaliver against me, to make sure they weren't hurting him, but I didn't dare touch him again. Something told me that if I did, he'd wake up. And that was not part of the plan.

Better safe than sorry.

I turned my attention back to Algebra, who was slowly inching backward like he thought I wouldn't notice.

"Don't even think about it," I warned, narrowing my eyes. "Come here."

The guilt on his face turned to defiance.

"Algebra. Now," I snapped, my voice pulsing with command.

His green, slit-pupil eyes glared at me as he stalked over like an angry cat forced into a bath.

"It's Albericus. Say it with me: Al. Be. Ri. Cus. Albericus," he enunciated with a scowl as he stopped in front of me.

"Right, right. Albert-help-us or whatever," I said, waving him off. "I've got something to ask you."

He gave me a skeptical look, then glanced over my shoulder. His eyes rolled dramatically as he sighed.

"For the love of everything sacred... just give him to me."

Without waiting, he strode over to the struggling group and easily slid an arm under Zaliver's waist. He hoisted him up like it was nothing, draping one of Zaliver's arms over his own shoulder to steady him.

Even knocked out, Zaliver still demanded attention, still took up all the space around him.

And yet, this part of the plan was mine.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

The two unfamiliar guards backed off quickly, letting Johnson and Luke step in on the opposite side. I blinked in disbelief. Stars above, how heavy is Zaliver? Watching them maneuver his massive body toward the car felt like watching a group of determined ants trying to haul a boulder.

Johnson pulled the back door open, and the guys clumsily hoisted Zaliver in like some unconscious giant. Even in his knocked out state, he still looked regal. Calm, almost. Like he'd just chosen to nap right in the middle of all the chaos. They shut the door, casting me uneasy glances before walking off to rejoin the small crowd of murmuring guards. Their expressions had shifted. They weren't gawking anymore; they were watching me differently now.

I straightened, turning my attention to Algebra. " please take us back to the house. The one Zaliver and I stayed in."

He nodded, slipping smoothly into the driver's seat. But I had a stop to make first.

"Oh, and Algebra?" I leaned forward slightly, resting my arms against the back of his seat. "As his Beta, I'm guessing you know better than anyone what kind of beast Zaliver can be, right?"

He flicked a glance at me in the rear view mirror, his jaw tight, before giving a short nod.

My lips curved into a sweet smile. "So I assume you and the others must have come up with a way to restrain him, just in case?" I asked, keeping my voice light as honey.

He hesitated, shifting slightly in his seat, then nodded again.

"What do you use?" My tone stayed airy, almost innocent.

His lips pressed together into a thin line, and he shook his head stubbornly.

I narrowed my eyes. "Tell me," I snapped, letting the full weight of my command slip into my voice.

"Shots," he muttered finally, yielding to the pressure.

I slumped back a little in my seat, disappointed. "Oh." That was the last thing I wanted: drugging him into submission. No. I needed him to wake up, look at me, and feel everything.

Still, a new thought sparked in my mind. My lips tugged into a slow, wicked grin.

"Make a quick stop at the pack house," I ordered. He frowned at the sudden diversion, but didn't bother to question it.

As soon as we pulled up, I jumped out and sprinted inside, ignoring Algebra's wide-eyed confusion. When I returned a few minutes later, he was still watching me warily from behind the wheel.

"What is that?" he asked as I slid back into the seat.

"Improvisation," I said flatly, holding the items close.

"I knew he was fucked," he muttered under his breath, shaking his head.

I shot him a dark, unpromising look.

We drove the rest of the way in silence, except for his occasional low grumbles about how I should be doing the heavy lifting. I ignored him completely and shoved open the door to the beautiful, still-unlocked house.

"Lay him on the bed. Face up," I instructed coolly, leading the way inside.

"Oh sure, no problem," he muttered sarcastically, straining under Zaliver's sheer weight. "Want me to undress the god whose neck you snapped, too?"

I scrunched my nose at him in disgust. "I don't know. Do you want to?"

He responded by raising a sharp middle finger at me.

"Alright, thanks. You can leave now." I stepped to the end of the bed, gazing down at my very unconscious, very bare-chested mate.

Algebra hesitated near the doorway, shifting his weight. "You sure about this? He is gonna be royally pissed when he wakes up. I should probably stay."

"I'll be fine. Thanks, though."

He gave me one last look, equal parts worried, annoyed, and amused, then finally turned and left.

I took a deep breath and crouched down to undo Zaliver's heavy boots, keeping my fingers from brushing against his skin more than necessary. When his shoes were off, I got to work on the more delicate part of my plan.

My heart pounded in my chest. Every move I made felt reckless, forbidden, and thrilling. But when I was finally done, I released a slow, shaky breath.

I could sit here and wait.

Or... I could have some fun with it.

Smiling, I slipped off my shoes and dropped my carry-on bag to the floor. Then I climbed onto the bed slowly and straddled him carefully, lowering myself until I was pressed flush against his chest.

Nothing at first.

Then, he stirred. His head tilted, slowly at first, then rolled to the side until a soft pop echoed from his neck. A deep, rumble of a groan vibrated from his throat. I instinctively tightened my thighs around his waist, which was all it took for his body to register something or rather, someone on top of him.

His dark lashes fluttered. And then his eyes snapped wide open.

Raging black.

Oh yeah. He was pissed.

I grinned sweetly down at him, not moving an inch.

"Doesn't this bring back memories?" I murmured softly, trailing my nose lightly down the side of his cheek.

He hissed in warning, his entire frame tensing up beneath me.

I giggled at his reaction.

As soon as I felt the full surge of his power stir beneath me, I slid off him and stood near the edge of the bed, crossing my arms with a twisted sort of satisfaction curling in my chest. He sat up slowly, wincing as he brought his hands up toward his neck, only to stop short. I caught the brief flash of confusion in his eyes before raw fury completely took over.

"What the hell is this?" he growled, yanking hard at the heavy chains that bound his wrists. The metal links clanked against each other, sharp and jarring in the quiet room. "What is this shit?"

"Props," I said coolly, lifting an eyebrow at him.

He narrowed his eyes, locking his gaze onto mine. "What the hell is that supposed to mean?"

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

I didn't bother answering that directly. Instead, I looked him straight in the eye and asked, "Now you tell me: why did you almost kill my father and then toss me away like I meant nothing? I am your mate godamit!! And why the hell did you think it was okay to mess with my memories? What type of game are you playing, WOLF GOD Zaliver?"

The raw demand in my voice made him still. For a heartbeat, the tension between us was a living, breathing thing.

"I wasn't actually going to kill him," he said tightly, his voice rough with restraint. "I would never hurt you like that."

I let out a bitter laugh. "But you'd erase my memories and ship me off without a word, right?"

He clenched his jaw, but didn't deny it. I could feel my temper pushing toward the surface like a boiling tide. My fingers twitched with the urge to claw something apart.

"It was never about hurting you," he said, his posture stiff against the headboard. "But if it came down to that or keeping you safe, then yeah. I'd choose safety. Every single time."

I threw my hands up, frustrated beyond belief. "There you go again! You always decide what's best for me without even asking me. This isn't a one-wolf pack; we're supposed to face things together. You don't get to choose for me, Zaliver. That was my decision to make."

I stomped forward, jabbing a finger into his bare chest with every word. "Not. Yours."

His eyes turned pitch black, swirling with restrained anger or maybe something darker. His nostrils flared, and for a second, the air between us thickened with his suffocating

power. I realized just how close we were and instantly stepped back. I wasn't going to let his heat, his scent, or his nearness cloud my thoughts again. No contact. Not yet.

He let out a slow, heavy breath, his voice softer now, almost... haunted. "There was a leak. Someone from the pack got information about you out. It happened the day I was getting ready to meet your parents. Albericus told me. Someone betrayed us for revenge."

My blood ran cold. "What kind of information?" I asked, my voice sharp. "Who did it? And who did they tell?"

He looked past me, his jaw clenched tight enough to snap. "The girl who tripped you in the training field: her. Her mate found her body before I could explain anything. He was furious. Swore revenge. He didn't get much from our systems, but just knowing you were my mate was enough. It put a massive target on your back."

I stared at him, trying to piece it all together as my heart pounded wildly against my ribs. "So... someone knew I was your mate and started hunting me down?"

He nodded, his eyes searching mine. "Yes. We didn't know who the enemy was or how far they'd go. The safest option was to get you as far from me as possible. The island had already been attacked once. Sending you back to your pack meant hiding you in plain sight. No one would suspect anything. But I knew you wouldn't leave willingly. That's why I... erased your memories. I thought if you hated me, you'd stay away. You'd be safe."

His voice faltered toward the end. For a moment, he didn't look like the fearsome, untouchable Lupus Deus. He just looked like a man caught between love and fear, trying to fix something he'd broken with his own hands.

I couldn't speak. My throat felt thick with too many overlapping emotions. I looked down, letting my dark hair shield my face like a curtain. I needed a second, just one moment to breathe through the whirlwind he'd just unleashed.

The girl Zaliver had killed in the clearing... her mate had wanted revenge. And to get it, he told someone that I was the Lupus Deus' mate. That revelation hit like a physical punch to the gut, but not for the reasons I expected.

Zaliver hadn't been manipulating me. He'd been trying to protect me the only way he knew how.

My insecure side, the part of me I hated but couldn't completely silence, sighed in quiet relief. But that didn't mean he was off the hook. Just because his intentions were noble didn't mean his actions were justified. And if I let him get away with it now, what would stop him from doing it all over again?

Lifting my chin, I met his intense gaze and pressed my lips into a firm, uncompromising line. His brows lifted slightly, as if he expected me to melt at his feet and sob, "Thank you, my hero!" Yeah. No chance in hell.

"That still doesn't excuse the crap you pulled," I said coldly.

His eyes darkened and his mouth opened, probably to yell or argue, but I cut him off immediately.

"Shut up."

To my absolute surprise, he did. His mouth clamped shut, though the dark fury didn't leave his gaze.

"Now, I'm going to teach your ancient ass.." He growled, a low, rumbling warning, but I didn't flinch an inch. " a lesson in something you've clearly missed in all your centuries of existence: relationships. Real relationships. They're about partnership. Equal footing. And you? You've been stomping all over mine."

I stepped closer, folding my arms tightly over my chest.

"And I'm not done with you yet. I still owe you for the forced knockouts, waking up to find someone on me, and let's not forget being chained up like some criminal. Payback's a process, Zaliver."

Slowly, he started to grin. That smug, breathtakingly irritating curve of his lips made my blood boil all over again.

"You know I can break out of these chains anytime I want, right?" he said, his voice dripping with cockiness like he'd just cracked some secret code.

I smiled right back at him, every bit as smug.

I was clearly enjoying this game.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

"Oh, I know. But do you want to hear something more interesting?" I tilted my head as his smug grin started to falter. He was watching me now with far more caution than arrogance. He didn't trust me, not fully. Good.

"You won't break out of them," I said. The words were delivered gently, but with absolute conviction. "Because I'm asking you not to. Because you owe me that much. If anything you said about mates meant a damn thing to you, then sitting here like this might be your first real shot at earning your way back onto my good side."

He looked shaken. The dark rage in his eyes faded back into their lighter, striking blue: shock and understanding flickering behind them like lightning across a stormy night sky.

"I don't know about you," I added quietly, stepping closer to the bed, "but I've been alone my whole life. And right now? That still sounds a hell of a lot better than being with someone who thinks love means control."

He was quiet for a long, heavy moment. I could almost hear the rusted gears of his mind turning, processing the shift in our dynamic.

"Is that what you want?" he finally rasped. His voice sounded raw, stripped of its usual absolute authority, like he was reaching for something precious but didn't know how to hold it without crushing it.

I didn't answer right away. I just crossed my arms and stared back at him, unyielding.

His jaw tightened until a muscle jumped in his cheek. "Fine," he muttered, leaning back against the pillows. "I'll play along."

"Welcome to my version of couple's therapy."

He scoffed, shaking his dark head like he couldn't believe what he'd just gotten himself into.

"So this is it? I expected you to be pissed, sure. But I didn't think you'd chain me up and plan my emotional rehab."

I arched a cool brow at him. "You're breathing, aren't you? So I didn't really kill you. Just... pressed pause. Call it unwilling unconsciousness."

His blue eyes narrowed into sharp slits. "So what now? You going to leave me here until you feel better?"

I let out a short, dry laugh that echoed off the high ceiling.

"Oh, please. That would be completely pointless. This isn't just about punishing you, Zaliver. It's about teaching you. How to communicate. How to rein in that primal impulse to bulldoze over people, especially me."

I took a deep breath and walked right up to the edge of the mattress, letting him really look at me, forcing him to hear me this time.

"You've got two choices, Zaliver. Break out of those chains and keep walking down your lonely, dictatorial path. Because I refuse to be with someone who lies, commands, and crushes my voice. That's not love. That's tyranny."

I leaned forward just a little, my eyes locked dead onto his.

"Or stay. Stay and prove to me that I can actually trust you. Stay and learn. I know it's ironic, me lecturing you like this while you're chained to a bed, but at least I give you a choice. Unlike you."

I let my words hang heavily in the air, weighted with a sharp, unspoken dare.

"The choice is yours."

He raised his chin defiantly, his brilliant blue eyes locking onto mine with that fierce, overwhelming intensity I used to associate purely with command and something else. Something raw and exposed.

"If staying here is what you want... then I'll stay."

His tone was solid, unwavering, almost too calm for a man wrapped in heavy metal. But I laughed softly, not out of genuine amusement, but out of plain disbelief.

"Why don't I believe you?" I tilted my head, watching the sudden tension flicker through his carved jaw.

"You can." The words came out rough, scraping their way out of his throat.

I folded my arms tightly across my chest. "Then I guess you're just going to have to prove it, aren't you?"

"I guess I will." He gave a firm, single nod. "And when I win you ba—"

"Let's not get ahead of ourselves," I cut in quickly, throwing my hands up to stop him before he got too confident.

He smirked: a slow, dangerous curve of his lips, like he was savoring some wicked, victorious thought I'd never get to hear aloud. That glint in his eye made me second-guess cutting him off, but it was too late to back down now.

We fell into a strange, heavy silence. He studied me with that same unreadable gaze, and I took him in fully, really looked at him for the first time since landing. He looked exhausted, worn down to the bone from whatever battles he'd been fighting in the dark. But the aura radiating from him hadn't dimmed one bit. If anything, the raw power and primal dominance clung to him even harder, like it was sewn into his very skin.

Maybe he needed the rest anyway. And I certainly wasn't going to sit around and babysit a brooding god.

I grabbed my carry-on bag from the floor and slipped my shoes back on, making my way toward the bedroom door.

The second he heard the shift of my weight on the hardwood floorboards, he shot straight up on the bed.

"Where are you going? Come back," Zaliver's voice rang out behind me, sharp and demanding.

I turned around slowly, raising a brow and flashing him a wicked, satisfaction-filled smirk.

"Careful," I warned in a light, sing-song tone. "That tension in your voice... might just snap something."

He froze mid-step, his bare arms half-raised toward me before he stopped himself. His eyes darted down to the heavy chains hanging from his wrists, pinning him down. He looked at the metal like it had personally offended his ancestors.

"Where are you going? You just got here," he barked, the sudden flush in his cheeks betraying the utter irritation boiling inside him.

"Out," I said with a careless shrug, biting back a triumphant grin. Riling him up like this had never felt so sweet.

"Out?" His voice dropped a full octave into a rumble. "With who? Where?" His fists curled tight, his legendary control thinning by the second.

"Where is out? Out is... outside. With who? Oh, you know... people. Where? Somewhere." My answer came sugary sweet, every single syllable designed to tease and infuriate him.

He growled—an actual, deep, chest-vibrating wolf growl—and took a furious step forward, only to pause with a low, harsh curse as one of the heavy chains creaked under the sudden tension.

"Vivian."

"Zaliver," I echoed mockingly, batting my dark lashes at him.

"You can't just leave me here like this."

"Oh really?" I arched an eyebrow high. "Because I seem to recall you had absolutely no trouble leaving me shackled in your room once, completely alone and confused."

He dragged a heavily tattooed hand through his messy dark hair in pure frustration, the cracks of desperation finally breaking through his calm, authoritative exterior.

"What the hell am I supposed to do when I'm bored?"

"You've got a mind link to literally every werewolf on this planet. Use your imagination. But here." I circled around the side of the bed, picked up the old laptop he had once handed me, and set it carefully in his chained hands. "Entertainment, courtesy of me."

He accepted the machine stiffly, glaring down at the dark screen like the object had personally betrayed him somehow.

"Enjoy yourself." I flashed him one last victorious smile and made my way out the door without giving him another glance.

"Vivian!" he roared.

The sheer volume of his voice followed me all the way down the grand staircase and right out the front door into the cool night air. I didn't slow down for a second. His raw frustration was pure music to my ears.

Step three?

Already in motion.

"Oh, this is going to be so much fun," I muttered to myself, whistling low under my breath as I vanished into the dark, satisfaction pulsing through my veins like wildfire.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

"You're killing me! I can't breathe! Oh my goddess, my baby!" Hannah wheezed through uncontrollable laughter, clutching her stomach like it might actually split from sheer joy.

I rolled my eyes at her theatrics, but a laugh slipped past my lips anyway. I tossed another grape into my mouth and watched her gasp for air like she was about to pass out on the rug.

"You really left him? Chained? Alone in the room with just a laptop?" she managed to get out, barely able to form actual words between cackles. "Beyoncé might be Queen B, Zaliver might be some almighty god, but you, you're my damn hero. All hail Queen V!"

She bowed dramatically from where she sat on the couch, her hand rising and falling like she was worshiping at my feet.

"Queen V?" I asked, arching a skeptical brow while adjusting my spot on the footstool and crossing my legs.

"Queen Vengeance," she declared proudly, a wicked smirk on her face.

I tilted my head back and burst into full laughter. "That's actually kind of perfect."

"I thought so." She gave me a sly little wink. "God, I missed you while you were off doing goddess-knows-what. And since you basically kidnapped my brother, I had no one else to annoy except Mark. Poor guy's redecorated the nursery like five times now."

Her voice softened near the end, and the shift in tone made my smile falter just a bit. It had been so long since I'd felt light enough to laugh like this. Hannah was probably the only person I didn't hold some bitter grudge against lately. She just... grounded me.

"How's Mark?" I asked, keeping my voice light but genuinely curious. Her eyes darted away from mine as she grabbed a grape and chewed it slowly, deliberately.

"Hannah," I said in warning, eyeing her closely, "where is Mark?"

She gave me an innocent shrug and a sheepish grin. "Running to get more paint... so he can redo the room again."

I stared at her for a beat, then grabbed a grape and lobbed it right at her head. "You are the worst."

"Correction," she said, catching a second grape deftly with her mouth as I threw it, "I'm hilarious."

Her bright laughter rang through the room like a melody, light and utterly contagious. I couldn't help but join in, shaking my head at her antics.

"Hey, I torture my mate. You torture yours," she said with a teasing wink.

That made me snort out loud. "Touché."

We both paused when the television volume suddenly spiked. A commercial was playing: one of those prescription ads filled with impossibly happy people doing mundane things in slow motion. I started giggling.

"What?" Hannah asked, eyeing me suspiciously.

"These stupid commercials always crack me up," I said.

"Why?" she asked, genuinely surprised.

I straightened up, faked a serious, almost robotic tone, and recited from memory:

"Helps relieve your symptoms... Side effects may include loss of sensation, crippling depression, unexplained weight loss, tingling limbs, spontaneous allergic reactions,

dizziness, fatigue, random muscle spasms, and pounding headaches. Pregnant? Planning to be? Don't. If you're middle-aged, old, young, or breathing... consult your doctor. Oh, and there's a slight chance of mood swings, heat strokes, strokes-strokes, and yeah, maybe death. Let your doctor know if you explode."

By the end, I was laughing so hard I could barely breathe, and Hannah was nearly crying beside me on the sofa.

For the first time in what felt like forever, I felt normal. Light. And maybe just a little wicked.

Queen Vengeance indeed.

"As if you can tell your doctor after you die!" Hannah gasped between bursts of laughter, practically wheezing as she clutched her belly.

I couldn't help it: I doubled over, snorting. "They might as well just slap a label on it: Death in a bottle!" My stomach hurt from how hard we were laughing, tears springing to my eyes.

Eventually, our laughter dwindled down to soft chuckles and hiccups. Hannah wiped the corner of her eye, sighing contentedly. It felt good to just be again. No territory issues. No mate drama. No intense staring contests with an alpha god-wolf. Just me, my best friend, and a bowl of grapes.

"So," she said, turning slightly and resting her chin in her palm. "What now? What's next for the infamous Vivian?"

I set the half-finished bowl of grapes down on the coffee table and stood up, placing my hands on my hips dramatically. A slow grin tugged at my lips.

"What?" Hannah sat up straight, her eyes narrowing as she studied my expression. "You've got that look, Vivian."

I rocked back on my heels, savoring her anticipation. "Well, I didn't just come here to say hi..."

Her eyes lit up instantly with excitement.

"I actually need a favor. In the near future," I added carefully.

Her entire face transformed into pure mischief. "Yesss!" she squealed, clapping like a child hopped up on sugar. "I don't even care what it is, I'm in. What do you need?"

I gave her a grateful smile, one that said: *thank the moon for you.*

It was sometime after three in the morning when I finally returned to the house.

The moment I stepped inside, absolute silence greeted me. No echoing footsteps. No grunts. No growls. No smug alpha trying to prove a point. I exhaled softly and started up the stairs, my footsteps light out of pure habit.

Stopping in the doorway of his room, I spotted Zaliver. Still chained. Still sleeping. His massive form was curled somewhat awkwardly under the heavy covers, the deep furrow in his brow eased by sleep. Even unconscious, he somehow managed to look like he was plotting global domination.

I watched him for a moment longer than necessary before turning away.

There was no way I was sleeping in the same bed as him tonight. Not after everything. I walked down the hall and stepped into the guest room two doors down. It wasn't nearly as big or luxurious, but it would do just fine. I tossed my bags into the closet and made a mental note to come back later for the rest of my stuff, mostly to avoid any cuddly alpha entrapment while he was awake.

Once I settled that, I padded downstairs to the kitchen, my stomach grumbling softly. Food sounded like the best way to keep myself from spiraling too deep into thought. Besides, I needed something comforting, something simple.

To my pleasant surprise, the kitchen was just as pristine as I remembered. Somehow, the place hadn't imploded in my absence. I raised a brow at that. A part of me expected Zaliver to have gone full caveman without me here, maybe even turned the place into some weird, dark den with claw marks in the counters.

Guess not.

I rummaged through the fridge and decided on something easy: spaghetti and garlic bread. That was one of the few meals I could make without burning the house down. That, and cereal. But cereal didn't count as cooking.

While the pasta boiled on the stove and the garlic bread crisped in the oven, I leaned against the counter, gazing out the window into the dark. My thoughts wandered without permission to everything, to nothing. To him.

The silence didn't last long.

"Vivian!" Zaliver's deep voice suddenly boomed from upstairs, slightly muffled but completely unmistakable. I could picture him now, rising groggily, realizing the heavy chains were still on. His wolf instincts must be howling.

I smirked, not even bothering to hide my satisfaction.

"What?" I yelled back cheerfully, knowing his sharp hearing would pick it up loud and clear. A muffled clatter followed, probably him reaching the absolute end of his chain, followed by a loud, irritated curse.

Now you know what it feels like to be restrained, I thought with grim satisfaction. *Welcome to my world.*

I stirred the sauce and flipped the garlic bread, a real smile tugging at my lips.

This might actually turn out to be a good dinner.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

Somehow, knowing I had Zaliver right where I wanted him dulled the sharpness of my resentment. I wasn't even close to forgiving him, no chance in hell, but there was something immensely satisfying in watching him experience a taste of what I went through... maybe even a bit more.

"Vivian!" he bellowed from upstairs again, his voice shaking the floorboards.

I rolled my eyes. "What!" I called back with zero urgency.

"Come up here!"

I smirked, taking my time stirring the food. "Nah!"

His responding growl echoed heavily through the house, and I couldn't help but laugh to myself.

After I finished up in the kitchen, I plated the food and balanced it on two trays—don't ask me why there were trays in this place. I added two glasses of water and carried everything upstairs, steady and careful, to where a very much awake and very annoyed Zaliver waited. Pushing the door open with my hip, I stepped inside.

He sat up on the bed, eyes narrowing between me and the food like he was expecting some kind of elaborate trick. I rolled my eyes and placed the tray on the nightstand beside the bed. Taking my own plate, I headed over to the small couch and settled down.

Zaliver picked up his fork and gave the food a tentative, suspicious poke.

"You know, that's kinda offensive," I said flatly, taking a bite of my own dinner. "And no, I didn't poison it. Where am I even supposed to get poison? Pretty sure the dollar store doesn't carry that kind of thing."

He glanced at me, then back at the plate, and after a beat, finally began eating.

At first, I watched him out of the corner of my eye. But the way he inhaled his food? Like a starving wolf. It made me pause mid-bite. The man was devouring it like he hadn't seen a proper meal in days. I sighed softly, setting my own plate down on the coffee table and standing up. That look in his eyes when I moved—half alert, half worried—was weirdly satisfying.

I didn't say anything. I just turned and went downstairs to get him another serving. Call it an instinct, but I knew he'd be eyeing mine the second he cleared his plate if I didn't.

God, washing all these dishes later was going to suck.

Sure enough, when I walked back into the bedroom, his plate was completely spotless, and his intense blue eyes were definitely fixed on mine. I handed him the extra plate and set the fresh water on the nightstand.

"Thanks," he muttered, barely pausing between mouthfuls. I nodded silently, noting how uncharacteristically quiet and tame he was being.

Once we both finished eating, he drained his water in one long gulp and set the empty glass on the floor. Sitting cross-legged on the mattress, he turned to look at me with a focused, heavy expression that made me sit up straighter. I crossed my legs on the couch to mirror him.

"So," I began casually, blinking at him like I hadn't just fed a literal god his dinner. "How was your day?"

"It's been fine," he said dryly, flexing his chained wrists slightly. "Thanks for asking."

I gave him a polite, mocking nod. "I saw you took a nap. That's good."

He said nothing, just kept staring like I was a complex puzzle he was desperately trying to solve.

"What's with the small talk?" he asked suspiciously.

I shrugged and leaned back against the cushions, feigning utter boredom. "Did you use the computer?"

He gave a cautious nod. "Yeah."

"What for?"

"Work."

I tilted my head. "And the mind link?"

"That too. Also work-related."

"What exactly does 'work-related' mean for a god?" I asked, gently swinging one leg over the edge of the couch.

He gave me a look like I was being dense. "It means I used them both... for work."

I raised a brow. "Yes, I got that part. But what does your work involve exactly? What does a god do all day?"

He didn't answer right away. His gaze swept slowly over my face... then dipped lower. I tensed, fighting the instinctive shiver that wanted to crawl up my spine at the sheer intensity of his focus.

"What is this?" he asked, an amused edge softening his voice. "An interrogation?"

I smiled faintly and shook my head, standing up from the couch. "Just curious."

"Nope," I said, propping my hands on my hips with a mock-serious expression. "I'm officially calling this day one of couple's therapy. And today's focus? You. Welcome to Zaliver 101."

A slow, wicked smirk curved his lips, and he tilted his head back, rubbing his jaw thoughtfully. I noticed the faintest trace of dark stubble along his chin—new, barely there, but oddly grounding. He was starting to look... a little more human.

"Oh, sweetheart," he drawled in that deep, velvet tone that made it far too easy to forget how dangerous he was. "If you want to know me, I've got a few ideas on where we could start."

His eyes had started to darken, pulling me into that deep midnight shade that I knew meant trouble.

I rolled mine in return and pointed a stern finger at him. "Oh, I'm sure you do. Too bad I'm not as impressed with what I do know. So how about you just answer the question instead?"

Whatever playfulness had been simmering in his expression vanished in an instant. His face shifted, twisting into something completely unreadable and dark. He dropped his head slightly, letting strands of jet-black hair fall forward and shadow his eyes. It wasn't just the angle or the sudden silence that made my pulse spike; it was the quiet, dangerous shift in the air around him. The heavy stillness right before a storm.

And then he looked up again, and that smile... It wasn't right. Too wide. Too sharp. It made something inside me curl tightly, but I held my ground. I had to.

His head tilted to the side in an odd, almost off-kilter way. "So... you don't like me, then?" he asked softly, but the undercurrent in his tone felt like broken glass wrapped in dark velvet.

The question blindsided me completely. I blinked, stunned into silence for a second.

"That's not what I said or meant," I said quickly, rushing to fix what he'd clearly misinterpreted. The second the words left my mouth, he straightened up. That weird, off-putting grin slipped away, replaced by a flicker of something almost... vulnerable in his midnight gaze.

"Oh."

Why was my heart suddenly racing?

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

I blinked, tried to steady my breathing, and cleared my throat before continuing. "I meant that you've shown me different sides of you: some good, some not-so-good. And since you already snooped around my mind without asking, I figured I'd get to know the rest of you

the old-fashioned way." I tried for a teasing tone to ease the thick tension. "You know... by actually talking."

He didn't respond right away. Instead, he dropped his gaze and started tracing idle patterns with his bare fingers along the wrinkled edge of the bedspread. I watched him closely. The silence in the room felt heavier than it should have.

I leaned back slightly against the couch and added, "Of course, I won't have the luxury of knowing when you're lying like you do with me."

His head snapped up instantly. There was a flicker of something fierce behind his eyes: something raw, intense, and deeply wounded.

"I will always be honest with you," he said, his voice carrying a weight that made the room feel suddenly smaller.

I raised an eyebrow at him. "Will you?"

"I am."

"Starting now?" I challenged, leaning forward and uncrossing my legs.

Something shifted in his posture. He paused, clearly understanding what I meant. I could see the hesitation in his eyes, the mental tug-of-war playing out behind them. His dark brows furrowed, and he looked down again, his face turned away as if trying to hide the truth behind the question.

I stood up slowly and walked toward him, making sure to keep a safe distance between us. "Even if it hurts me? Even if it's something I don't want to hear?" I pressed softly, but firmly.

He stayed silent, head lowered, and for a moment I began to think he might ignore me completely. But then, slowly, he lifted his face. And when his gaze met mine, there was no doubt: his eyes glowed with a sincerity I hadn't seen in him before.

"Yes," he said, his voice low but completely resolute. "I give you my word. From this moment forward, I'll be honest with you. Even if it hurts. Even if you hate me for it."

And for the first time since all of this madness started, I saw something in him I hadn't expected.

Respect.

I stared into his eyes—so still, so wide, so remarkably open—that it nearly made my chest ache. For once, there was no command or suffocating dominance in his gaze. Just quiet hope. Worry. A kind of softness I wasn't used to seeing in someone like Zaliver. Vulnerable and completely raw.

I gave him a small smile, something faint and probably more pitying than I meant for it to be. Guess he was a fast learner after all.

"Okay," I said casually, stepping around his side of the bed to grab the empty plates and glasses.

He echoed back at me, sounding genuinely confused. "Okay?"

I disappeared into the walk-in closet and grabbed my pajamas, tossing them over my shoulder with practiced ease. I wasn't going to make a huge production out of this. He could sit and stew in his confusion a little longer.

By the time I came back out into the bedroom, he'd shifted off the mattress and stood on his feet, clearly ready to interrogate me further.

"Okay? That's it? No follow-up questions? I didn't even answer the one you asked me earlier about my work," he said, his brows pulled tight, a distinct hint of frustration bleeding through his confusion.

"Yup," I said nonchalantly, walking past him again to scoop up the last glass from the floor. When I turned back toward the doorway, he was straining against the chains just enough to step closer to me: close, but careful not to be reckless. His gaze dropped to the clothes folded over my shoulder.

And just like that, I knew it was time to make my exit.

"What's with the clothes?" he asked, trying to sound casual, but his voice cracked slightly with urgency. "You're going to come back and change anyway. Just leave them here."

I backed up into the doorway, a sly smirk curling my lips.

"Enjoy the bed, babe. I'll be enjoying mine... two doors down. Good night." I bumped the bedroom door closed with my hip before I could see the exact moment his eyes darkened with rage.

"Vivian, come back here. We're not done talking!" he bellowed from behind the closed wood.

I didn't even need to raise my voice to answer. He'd hear me loud and clear regardless.

"Yes, we are."

"Come back! I... I'll answer anything you want!" he called out again, his voice echoing into the hallway.

I shook my head, heading downstairs and placing the plates and glasses gently into the kitchen sink. Rolling up my sleeves, I braced both hands on either side of the basin and looked up at the polished cabinets in front of me.

"No thanks. I'm no longer interested." I turned on the faucet, letting the sudden rush of water drown out whatever else he had to say.

Upstairs, something crunched loudly. A wall? A chair? Maybe just his pride.

Welcome to Vivian 101.

After washing the dishes, I moved quietly through the dark house, flicking off lights and leaving him to stew upstairs. I slipped into the guest room two doors down and left the door wide open. No creaking floorboards beneath my feet—thank the goddess. I set the alarm on my phone and quickly changed into my pajamas, sitting stiffly on the very edge of the bed. I knew full well that if I actually lay down and let myself drift off, I'd never wake up in time for what I had planned next.

As expected, it didn't take long for him to transition from roaring commands to... whining.

At first, I wasn't even sure what I was hearing. That low, pitiful sound couldn't possibly be coming from Zaliver. The legendary Zaliver. My ears twitched toward the quiet hallway anyway.

It threw me completely off balance. I even took a step toward the doorway before I caught myself. My wolf pushed against my skin, restless and itching to comfort our mate. But I held her back with a firm thought.

Seven minutes and ten seconds of pitiful whining later, the groaning started. Then came the low growls: sharp, guttural, and restless. I rolled my eyes and stifled a laugh into my hand. His moods shifted like storm clouds over an open sea.

There was no doubt in my mind now: his beast was running the show, and it had clearly named this mission "Operation Get Vivian Into Bed With Me." I was honestly impressed by the sheer dedication.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

But the fact he hadn't broken those chains yet? That told me something important. Despite the beast's immense frustration, he was actually respecting my boundaries. That wasn't something I'd expected from him. I should've, but I hadn't.

When midnight hit, he finally gave in and laid down. Not without broadcasting his utter distaste for sleeping alone, though. His loud grumbles eventually gave way to soft, uneven breaths echoing down the hallway. I knew he wasn't really asleep just resting, on edge, waiting. Knowing I wasn't lying next to him tonight would keep him in that light, restless state. Basic Mating 101.

And yes, I'm apparently labeling everything "101" tonight. I don't know why. It's a thing now.

I lay there in the guest bed, watching the digital clock on my phone inch forward, not daring to let my body relax enough to fall under. When I felt the time getting close, I reached for my phone 2:08 AM. Good. I turned off the alarm before it could make a single sound and rolled out of bed quietly, landing softly on the balls of my feet near the window.

Outside, it was completely dark and hauntingly still. The tall trees loomed like silent guards around the property, and beyond them, I could sense the heavy weight of wards and defensive spells Zaliver had probably placed to keep curious wolves out.

But guards? Physical ones?

Time to find out.

Tiptoeing out of my room felt like sneaking straight into enemy territory, especially knowing Zaliver was resting just a few steps down the hall. My heart pounded against my ribs with every single breath, the sharp thrill of trying not to get caught coursing through me like wildfire. Every microscopic creak in the floor, every whisper of movement made me freeze in place. Still, somehow, I made it down the grand staircase without alerting him.

But just as I reached the bottom step, his heartbeat shifted. Fast. Sharp. Alert.

He moved upstairs. I could sense the sudden tension in the air, the brief, heavy silence before a storm.

And then

"Vivian."

His voice echoed directly inside my head. For the first time in... I couldn't even remember how long, Zaliver actually used our mind link.

"Yes?" I answered in my head, playing it as casual as humanly possible.

"What are you doing?"

His words came fast, frantic, laced with something deeper pure panic. The sheer strength of his raw emotion through the bond nearly knocked me off balance.

"Nothing. Go back to sleep," I replied quickly, trying to sound lighthearted and completely unbothered.

"Like hell I will. When my mate is leaving the house in the middle of the night?" he growled, the immense weight of his territorial fury crashing straight into my chest.

I winced slightly at the impact.

"I'm not leaving. I'm just stepping out for a little bit."

I moved quietly toward the heavy front door, hoping he wouldn't push further. But his heartbeat only grew faster, echoing louder across our link. It was almost concerning how frantic he was.

"Vivian, wait. Let me come with you!"

There was a harsh, metallic groan from upstairs something thick and iron bending under immense pressure. My brows drew together as I looked up toward the ceiling, easily imagining him gripping the frame or the chains hard enough to warp the solid metal.

"Not needed. I'll be back soon," I said, keeping my mental voice firm, but gentle.

I waited in the dark foyer, holding my breath.

"But "

"Trust me," I interrupted, softening my tone even more. "I'll be fine. I'm literally just going into the backyard."

His silence was deeply reluctant, but it was silence nonetheless. That was my cue. I slipped through the heavy front door, easing it shut behind me until the latch clicked silently into place.

The night air was crisp and completely quiet. A gentle breeze stirred the high canopy of trees, and above me, the full moon hung brighter than usual soft, glowing, watching over the territory.

I took a deep, grounding breath of the cool air, then started around the side of the house, passing the dark swimming pool and heading straight for the edge of the woods. I didn't stop until I felt far enough from the house to breathe freely without his suffocating aura pressing against me.

Closing my eyes, I reached deep inward for my wolf. It took a moment longer than it usually did, but she was there. Waiting. Watching. Almost... hesitant. That was odd for her.

Still, I exhaled slowly and let her rise to the surface.

The shift hit fast. A sudden flash of pain flared behind my eyes, just for a split second sharp and blinding and then vanished into nothing. I could have sworn my vision tinted a dangerous, crimson red for a single breath.

I shook my heavy wolf head after shifting completely, trying to dispel the weird, lingering sensation that settled into my fur and bones.

How long had it been since I last shifted? Far too long.

Stretching my powerful limbs, I broke into a full run. The yard if I could even call it that was massive. It felt like it stretched on forever, like we were living right next to a private, endless forest. It was wild, exhilarating, and completely liberating. Honestly, it made sense for someone as dominant as Zaliver to need so much open space to roam.

Still, I couldn't help but roll my eyes internally at the sheer extravagance of it all. What did he even do out here alone host private werewolf marathons?

I knew what I was doing was inherently suspicious: running off into the woods in the middle of the night without giving him a proper explanation. But I needed this.

One: my wolf desperately needed to stretch her legs and breathe.

Two: I needed to remind Zaliver that I wasn't a piece of breakable glass. He was protective overly so, to a suffocating degree sometimes. I got it. He had ancient enemies. He'd lost people he cared about. But sometimes I felt like he truly believed I'd shatter into pieces if left alone for too long. I wasn't fragile.

If I were ever in real, life-threatening danger, I'd call for him in a heartbeat. But this? This was something I had to do completely on my own.

Even if it meant sneaking out of the house like a rebellious teenager.

Eventually, the constant buzzing of his mounting anxiety through our mate bond started to gnaw at my nerves. I knew he hadn't fully relaxed up there, trapped in those chains. With a reluctant sigh, I turned my wolf around and circled back toward the dark outline of the house.

But just as I stepped onto the wooden boards of the back porch and began the agonizing process of shifting back something felt... wrong.

Terribly, horribly wrong.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

Shifting back had always been smooth for me: so quick and effortless it felt like slipping smoothly into a second skin. But this time was entirely different. The moment the transition ended, I became painfully aware that something was terribly wrong. A strange, unnatural glow shimmered around my body, only to flicker out like a candle being smothered by heavy storm clouds.

Then came the pain.

It hit me like a iron hammer to the skull hot and blinding, making my vision swim in a sickening haze of burning reds and deep oranges. My eyes flew open just as a sharp, sickening crack shot through my left wrist, the unnatural angle twisting my stomach into tight knots.

I choked on a scream but forced it down, clamping my mouth shut and holding my breath against the dark. The fire in my lungs battled the agonizing heat in my arm. My fingers instinctively clutched my broken wrist tightly to my chest as a numbing throb pulsed through the limb, the kind of severe pain that blurred the line between searing and dull.

Another sharp snap echoed.

This time, it felt like my entire nervous system short-circuited from the sheer shock. My knees buckled beneath me, and I crumpled hard onto the porch floor, the relentless agony drawing a breathless whimper from my throat. My chest rose and fell in sharp, ragged gasps as I tried to process what was happening to me. I'd never broken a single bone before not even during my excruciating first shift years ago. And I certainly hadn't expected this to happen now.

The heavy front door slammed open with a deafening bang.

I didn't bother to look up. I couldn't. The pain had me completely locked in place, my body trembling violently and my mind swimming in darkness.

A massive shadow loomed over me before swiftly lowering. A hand large, pale, entirely familiar reached out toward me. My wolf instincts immediately roared to life. I bared my teeth and snapped wildly, my beast reacting defensively before I could even think to stop her.

"Shh... shh, it's alright. Let me take a look, Vivian."

His voice. Deep, low, extraordinarily careful. Zaliver.

I forced myself to glance up through the hazy blur of tears.

Moonlight played across the sharp angles of his face, softening his expression. His normally intense blue eyes glowed faintly in the dark, the contrast stark against his pale skin. Strands of inky black hair fell messily over his forehead, glinting silver beneath the open night sky. His right hand stayed outstretched toward me, waiting patiently, even as his other wrist bore the long, uneven iron chains from the heavy shackles he'd somehow torn completely free from the bedroom frame.

My eyes narrowed sharply on the dangling metal. "You broke out." My voice came out choked and strained, teeth clenched tightly against the agonizing pulses in my bone.

The profound concern on his face instantly flickered into sheer annoyance. "Give me your hand, Vivian."

His tone left absolute zero room for argument.

I hesitated for a second, then reluctantly held out my mangled wrist toward him.

He took it gently in both of his hands, his touch surprisingly careful despite the sharp tension in his jaw. Then, a bright glow radiated directly from his fingertips: a stark, pure white light that quickly spread across my skin, sending a strange, powerful pulse straight through my bloodstream.

Something deep inside me stirred.

It felt like being pulled at from within, some ancient, dormant part of my soul waking up in direct response to his power. I sucked in a sharp breath as the sudden warmth spread from my wrist down into the very core of my body. My muscles clenched involuntarily, heat pooling low and heavy.

I swallowed hard, my cheeks burning in the night air. Zaliver's intense focus never wavered, completely locked on mending my arm.

The agonizing fire began to ebb away, bit by bit. Just as I started to think I could handle the lingering ache, another sharp snap echoed through the quiet night air as my wrist shifted forcefully back into place. I flinched, bracing for another wave of blinding agony. But none came.

Instead, a strange, cooling calm settled over my entire body.

When Zaliver finally pulled his hands back, the white glow faded into nothing, and so did the strange warmth. My breathing was still ragged and unsteady, and his wasn't much better.

I flexed my left wrist slowly, testing the joint. There was a faint, dull ache like I'd written a ten-page essay without taking a break but nothing more.

"What the hell was that?" I asked, staring at my hand in absolute wonder.

Zaliver sat back on his heels with a heavy sigh, rolling his neck to release the sudden tension. His glowing eyes dimmed back to their usual piercing blue. He reached out again, gently testing the bone with his thumbs and nodding to himself as if thoroughly satisfied with his work.

Still unsure, I pulled my arm protectively back against my chest.

"You've got about three to four days before your new form is fully ready," he explained evenly. "This kind of thing happens sometimes. Your body's adjusting, making physical space for the shift. That kind of internal strain can cause unexpected breaks... like a false trigger."

My face paled instantly. "Three to four days? You're guessing? Are you seriously guessing right now?" I snapped, my voice rising in sharp disbelief. "You're the one who bit me, Zaliver! You can't just 'guess' when it comes to something like this!"

The words tumbled out of me in a frantic rush of frustration and underlying fear.

Because beneath all of it, one undeniable truth pulsed in my chest like a violent second heartbeat.

Something deep inside me was changing something wild, something ancient. And there was no turning back.

"Yes, three to four," Zaliver answered, giving a simple shrug. "I said I guess because unlike you, I don't have a wolf. So your hybrid shift is probably going to hit a little differently than mine does."

He pursed his lips, and I could feel the sheer irritation bubbling in my chest at his calm demeanor.

I narrowed my eyes at him, far more annoyed than I wanted to admit. "You broke out," I repeated, my tone sharper than before.

His face twisted into pure disbelief. "Are you fucking serious right now? You break a bone, and all you care about is me breaking out of those chains just to check if you were okay?"

I crossed my arms tightly, ignoring the lingering sting in my wrist. "Yes, I'm serious. And I'm still pissed. You broke out and left the house."

He groaned loudly and rolled his eyes toward the sky, looking at me like I was being entirely unreasonable. "Technically, I'm still chained. And," he pointed down toward his bare feet, "I'm standing on the very last step of the back porch. So technically, I'm still inside the house."

He lifted one of his heavy hands to show the steel shackles still wrapped securely around his wrist and grinned smugly down at me.

Gods, he was utterly impossible.

"Fine," I muttered, completely defeated. "Get inside. And don't leave the doorway again."

His dark eyes flicked from my face down to my wrist, then back up again. I knew what was coming the second his body tensed and he stepped forward.

"Hey! Put me down! I broke my wrist, not my damn legs!" I yelled as he easily scooped me up into his chest like some fragile damsel in distress.

He didn't even flinch at my shouting. "Don't care," he grumbled under his breath, turning around and carrying me up the stairs toward the house.

I squirmed uselessly in his arms at first, but fighting his sheer physical strength was entirely pointless. And honestly, I didn't have the energy left to try.

Chapter 110: Morning Afters and Bare Chests

Vivian's POV

When he turned to head into our room, I straightened my legs and braced them against the doorway, blocking him completely. He frowned down at me, clearly not expecting the sudden resistance.

"I'm sleeping down there tonight," I said firmly, jerking my chin toward the guest room two doors away.

His intense gaze searched mine. Something flickered deep in his eyes regret, maybe but he didn't push me. He set me down gently on my feet, and I immediately began backing away toward the guest room.

I paused at the door, holding the frame. "Thank you... for helping with my wrist. And for not stopping me earlier," I said softly, my voice barely above a whisper. "Good night."

Before he could respond, I slipped into the guest room and shut the door securely behind me.

I collapsed straight onto the bed, letting pure exhaustion pull heavily at my limbs. The tension, the shift, the blinding pain it all caught up with me in one long, shaky exhale into the dark.

I was just starting to relax when I heard it: bare feet padding softly across the floorboards outside in the hallway. I froze, holding my breath. *No way.*

Pushing the covers aside, I crept to the door and eased it open a crack. And there he was.

Zaliver was lying directly on the wooden floor outside my room, bundled in a thick blanket with two pillows shoved awkwardly under his head like it was the most natural thing in the world.

He looked up at me with a triumphant grin, like he hadn't just set up camp outside my door like a rejected, oversized puppy.

I walked out and sat down on the floor beside him, my arms folded tightly across my chest. "What are you doing? Go back to your bed. That can't possibly be good for your back."

"Nope," he said, popping the 'p' popped with infuriating satisfaction.

I scowled down at him. "Why not?"

"Because that bed's not comfortable without you. None of them are."

The sheer raw honesty of the words hit me like a physical blow to the chest. I opened my mouth to shoot back a witty reply, but nothing came out.

"Idiot," I whispered softly, leaning in to press a gentle kiss to his cheek before pushing myself back up to my feet. "Suit yourself. But don't complain tomorrow when you wake up feeling like you've aged fifty years."

He growled low in his chest at the quick retreat.

I paused, my hand lingering on the brass doorknob. "I'm still mad at you, you know."

"I know," he said quietly, his gaze softening in the dim hallway light. "And you have every right to be. I'm starting to realize I'm a bit of a jackass when it comes to doing things with you."

His voice was softer now, almost like he wasn't even talking to me, just admitting the truth out loud for his own sake.

"So... I'm sorry," he whispered.

I bit the inside of my cheek, holding my ground. "Apology not accepted. Especially not from a disembodied voice at three in the morning," I replied, keeping my tone light but carefully guarded.

He chuckled softly under his breath.

"I'm beginning to think sarcasm is your way of dealing with things when you don't know what else to say," he murmured.

"Good night, Zaliver."

"Good night, my little cloud."

I rolled my eyes, but the corners of my lips tugged upward in spite of myself as I shut the door.

Yeah, maybe sarcasm was my shield... but he was still the only person who ever tried so hard to see past it.

Waking up the next morning wasn't the usual struggle it used to be especially not when I could immediately sense Zaliver's presence just outside my room. Sleep hadn't come easily, though, despite how utterly exhausted I'd been. I guess being the brain behind a half-baked escape plan and trying to outwit the Lupus Deus takes a heavy physical toll. I honestly don't know how he manages to keep up that calm, calculating demeanor all the time. It's exhausting just to watch.

I groaned aloud as I rolled out of bed, my body aching like I'd run a marathon in my sleep. I padded into the adjoining bathroom and stared blankly into the mirror. Yikes. My dark hair was a frizzy mess, one side of my face had a faint pillow imprint, and my eyes looked puffy with deep shadows beneath them. I looked... fantastic.

Flicking on the faucet, I splashed ice-cold water over my face until I felt the sluggish fog in my head start to clear. But even after drying off with a towel, something still felt... wrong. A strange chill clung to my skin despite the warm room, and a weird queasiness lingered low in my chest. It wasn't just physical it was deeper, like something inside my very soul was completely unsettled.

My wolf stirred weakly in my mind, her presence unusually sluggish and faint. I nudged her gently, concerned by the silence, and received a soft, tired nudge back. Not much, but it was something. She wasn't gone, just... drained. Maybe it was a delayed reaction to everything that had happened during the failed shift. Maybe she felt the same unspoken unease I couldn't put a name to.

I brushed my teeth, dragged a comb through my rebellious hair, tied it back tightly with a spare band, and then stretched until my spine popped satisfyingly. It wasn't much, but it made me feel slightly more human.

I was ready to face the music or rather, face Zaliver.

When I opened my bedroom door, I expected to find him camped out nearby like the overly possessive alpha he was, but to my surprise, the hallway was completely empty. No pile of blankets, no brooding figure perched in a chair. Hearing faint noises coming from downstairs, I followed the irresistible scent of something delicious wafting up through the air.

The second I stepped into the bright kitchen, I froze dead in my tracks.

Zaliver was cooking.

Shirtless.

I couldn't breathe.

Holy celestial hell. If there was a divine being responsible for sculpting strong, golden, mouthwatering male torsos, they had seriously outdone themselves with him. Every line of chiseled muscle, every ripple of raw strength across his ribs was like an ode to power and temptation. And those loose cotton pajama pants hanging dangerously low on his hip bones? Not helping. Not helping at all.

He glanced casually over his shoulder and caught me staring wide-eyed and slack-jawed. He grinned knowingly, those piercing blue eyes drinking in my helpless reaction.

I closed my mouth with an audible gulp and tried my best to compose myself as I shuffled around to the far side of the counter, keeping a safe distance between us.

"Morning," I said, trying to force my voice to sound normal. "Where's your shirt?"

He didn't even turn all the way around, but I could hear the deep smirk in his voice.

"Didn't match my chains. Figured shirtless was the better look."

Of course. Typical alpha arrogance.

I let out a dismissive hum, pretending to be utterly unimpressed, but my eyes completely refused to obey my brain. His broad back was just as ridiculously impressive as his front. I had a sudden, irrational urge to run my hands down the smooth expanse of his shoulder blades, to feel the burning warmth of his skin beneath my fingers.

Goddess help me.