

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna chapter 11-20

I froze. My mate. He said it out loud. My heart slammed in my chest at the unexpected wave of warmth that bloomed through me. My wolf stirred, ears perked, tail wagging as if she'd been waiting to hear those words her whole life.

"She's not safe to roam the island freely just yet," he continued. "So I'm assigning her personal protection while I prepare for tonight's meeting. Johnson, Courtney, Luke, Mila. Step forward."

I blinked at him. Guards? Seriously? I bit my tongue, barely holding in my frustration. "Not safe to roam" sounded an awful lot like "not allowed to be free."

"I " I started, but yelped silently as he gave my hand another firm squeeze. Okay. Rude.

Four figures stepped forward two men and two women. They were all towering over me. One of the guys was even taller than Zaliver, which I hadn't thought possible. It was kind of funny, watching a giant man bow to someone slightly shorter, but the room's energy kept my amusement in check.

The women had their hair pulled back tightly in ponytails. One was pale with a jagged scar slashing through her right brow, her gaze hard but sharp. The other, tan-skinned with sharp cheekbones, had the kind of stern face that screamed no-nonsense. As for the men well, the tall one with curly blond hair had a glint of mischief in his ocean-blue eyes, loose strands falling over his forehead. The red-haired one, with piercing green eyes, reminded me of someone... Lana. That was it. He had her same calculating stare.

As they reached us, they dropped to one knee. Zaliver released my hand and walked forward, stopping now and then to look over each one. The room tensed, the air thick with anticipation. Then, he spoke.

"Will you protect her with your life?"

My breath hitched. Four guards. Four lives. Sworn to protect me.

"Yes, Alpha," they replied in unison, their voices firm.

I swallowed hard. No one had ever said that to me before. Not even close. The weight of those words wasn't lost on me. My chest tightened.

"Because if you fail... you'll pay with your life."

Damn. That wasn't just protection. That was war-level devotion.

And still, something in me stirred. Even beneath the threat, I could feel his intent. My wolf lifted her head, eyes gleaming. See? He cares.

Maybe she was right. Maybe I had been too hard on him.

"Yes, Alpha," they echoed again.

Zaliver turned and came back to me, grabbing my hand once more. I didn't resist this time. I let him pull me along, the sound of soft footsteps behind us telling me the guards had fallen into step. Out of curiosity or maybe politeness I peeked over my shoulder. The others kept a respectful distance, their gazes dropping as soon as I looked at them. Heat crept up my neck and I quickly turned back around.

"Why do they all bow their heads like that?" I asked, my voice small in the quiet hallway. Not the most important question I could've asked, but it was the one that escaped first.

He led me through a glass door, the cool air brushing over my skin and making me shiver.

"Because I'm a god," he said without pause. "And you are my mate. Refusing to bow would be a challenge to my authority. Other alphas answer to me, so they don't receive that kind of respect."

I nodded slowly. I couldn't say I understood it completely, but... it did make sense, in a strange werewolf-god kind of way.

"And the guards?" I asked, narrowing my eyes. "You couldn't give me a heads-up? Something like, 'Hey, I'm gonna assign you some shadowy bodyguards. Cool?' That would've been nice."

He didn't respond immediately, just glanced at me from the corner of his eye. A small smile tugged at the edge of his mouth.

Of course, that wasn't a real answer.

Typical.

"This is no ordinary pack, Vivian. Your... existence, for lack of a better word, hasn't been explained to them yet. Which means the pack doesn't know who you are. You could easily be mistaken for an intruder," he told me, his tone serious.

I raised a brow and let out a short laugh. His expression didn't shift, which only made me chuckle more.

"Oh please," I said, waving a hand, "You make it sound like I swam across the whole damn ocean just to sneak in here. Do you have any idea what lives in those waters? Sharks. And probably other scary stuff. I'm not about to get eaten just for a dramatic entrance." I muttered the last part mostly to myself, still slightly breathless from our walk.

I didn't even realize Zaliver had turned to glance at me, a subtle smile tugging at the corner of his mouth. He didn't say anything, just shook his head in amusement and kept walking back toward the living room where we'd first started.

I followed, grumbling playfully, tugging my arm across my chest in a lazy stretch. "Man, that was a workout. What floor is this anyway?"

Zaliver reached into his back pocket and pulled out his phone. A few taps later, he looked up. "Fifth floor."

I blinked. "Fifth?! You've got to be kidding me. You better have an elevator. If I'm going to be stuck here, I'm claiming a room on the first floor. I'm not dragging myself up five flights every time I want a snack."

"We do. And no." His tone was firm, unapologetic.

I narrowed my eyes. "You do have an elevator? Then why the hell did we take the stairs? And what do you mean no?" I almost yelled, offended on a deeply spiritual level. That was just cruelty. I hoped he stubbed his toe on a wall corner. Though, knowing him, the wall would probably shatter first.

He didn't even blink. "I said no, because you're staying in my room. With me."

Before I could react, he pulled out a wallet and slid out a sleek black card. He handed it to me without ceremony.

"Wait "

"I have to go," he cut me off smoothly. "I'll see you later. Go explore. And don't leave her side," he added, speaking to someone behind me. "I expect her day to be perfect."

Before I could blink, he leaned in, wrapped me in his arms, and inhaled deeply against my neck. Then he was gone.

Like actual smoke, he vanished faster than I could process.

I was left standing there, mouth ajar, black card in hand, still feeling the ghost of his touch on my skin.

"What the hell just happened?" I muttered, spinning around in confusion.

Chapter 12: Let's Buy a Boat

Vivian Grey's POV

Four guards had suddenly appeared like they'd been there all along. The tall blond one stepped forward, grinning like he'd been waiting for this moment.

"I'm Johnson, resident fun guy. That redhead over there is Luke, the killjoy. The one with the scar? Courtney. Enough said. And the one glaring at me is Mila, who secretly wants to—"

Before he could finish, Mila stormed over and began smacking him repeatedly with both hands.

"What is wrong with you!" she yelled, leaping to reach his face, though her height made the effort hilariously ineffective.

Johnson just laughed and swatted her hands away gently. Luke sighed and stepped in, pulling the two apart with a tight-lipped apology.

"Sorry about that, Luna. Johnson's a bit much," Luke said, his voice smooth and oddly calming.

Courtney just stood between them, stoic, unreadable.

"Uh," I glanced down at the black card in my hand. It was growing warm, like the money on it knew it didn't belong to me and was burning with temptation.

The four of them waited patiently. They all looked older than me, experienced, steady. But there was something else too. Their presence didn't make my wolf restless. If anything, she felt settled. Alert, but not tense. Like being around familiar scents in a place we hadn't yet understood.

I snapped out of my thoughts, realizing how quiet I'd gotten.

"Sorry," I said sheepishly, clutching the card. "Still kind of disoriented. I literally woke up just a few hours ago, and now he's gone and left me with his card like it's a normal thing. I have no idea what's happening."

Their amused looks made the heat rise to my cheeks.

"It's okay, Luna," Courtney said brightly. "Alpha Lupus told us to take you shopping today to help you feel more at home. He said not to worry about money. Spend until you drop, basically."

I stared at the card again, lips curling into a dry smile.

"Oh, that jackass never tells me anything," I muttered without thinking.

Johnson immediately started coughing, grabbing his throat like he'd choked on air. The others stared at me like I'd just insulted the moon goddess herself. Even Luke blinked in disbelief.

"What?" I asked, confused.

"S-sorry," Mila stammered, eyes wide. "We're just not used to hearing someone talk about the Alpha like that."

Johnson finally recovered, patting his chest dramatically. "Damn. I kinda wish he was here to hear that. Then again, I like our Luna with her head still on her shoulders."

I smirked. Strangely, I didn't feel afraid. Maybe because I already called Zaliver a jackass to his face before. Or maybe because I was starting to realize something.

I wasn't just in this world anymore.

I was part of it.

"Good. You're trusting him now," my wolf murmured.

I rolled my eyes. It's not trust, it's knowing I can get away with calling a god a jackass.

"Um, would you like to go shopping now, Luna?" Courtney asked carefully, her tone polite but clearly on edge.

I looked down at the sleek black card in my hand, the one Zaliver had so graciously handed over. A slow, wicked grin spread across my face before I could stop it.

"Oh no," Johnson groaned behind me. "I know that look. My little sister makes that face right before she drains my account out of spite."

I glanced up at the guards posted in front of me. My smile only widened, creepy and unapologetic.

"I don't usually like spending other people's money," I said sweetly, "but who am I to turn down a gift?"

Mila leaned closer to Johnson and whispered, "Why do I get the feeling we're not making it out of today alive?"

"Because we probably aren't," he muttered with a sigh.

I laughed, the kind of laugh that came from deep in my chest. Zaliver had no idea what he'd just done.

He'd handed me power. And for the first time since I got here, I felt free.

"When Alpha said shopping, I really don't think he meant this kind," Luke said for the hundredth time, his voice teetering between panic and resignation. "Please don't buy a boat."

I waved him off, not even sparing him a glance. He groaned and started tugging on his hair, mumbling under his breath like he was already writing his eulogy.

Zaliver won't actually kill them, I told myself. Probably.

The old man showing me the boat looked delighted. "This one's the best in stock, little lady. You won't find anything swifter than this beauty."

I stared at the vessel. It was compact, enough for two people, painted in a light shade of red with bold yellow letters on the side spelling Freedom. It was too on the nose to be a coincidence.

Maybe this was the universe giving me a sign.

After dragging the guards with me to the docks under the excuse of wanting a change of scenery, I'd been shocked to see that the island wasn't some hidden jungle fortress. It had paved streets, neat houses, stores, and people walking around like we were in a sleepy town somewhere in the States. The only difference was the occasional wolf trotting through the crowd like it belonged.

When we arrived at the docks, I insisted on seeing the smallest boats. That's when things got suspicious for my guards. Luke started getting jumpy. Courtney and Mila stuck to the edges, their eyes scanning constantly. Johnson had quietly disappeared the second we arrived, slipping away without a word.

Smart wolf.

"So how much?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady. I had no idea how much money Zaliver had on his card, though six hundred years was a long time to build up a fortune.

The old man looked me over and grinned. "Fifteen thousand for a pretty smile like yours. How 'bout it?"

I had no idea if that was a deal or a ripoff. I also didn't care.

"Deal," I said quickly.

Luke let out a strangled sound behind me and began pacing like a caged animal.

"Luna," he said, voice low and serious, "I'm sorry, but I can't let you go through with this. I know what this is. Alpha needs to know—"

"No, it's not, I promi—"

But before I could finish, both Luke and the old man blinked. Their eyes turned silver.

My heart skipped a beat.

"Vivian," they said in unison.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

A chill crawled up my spine, even as curiosity sparked in my wolf. I knew that voice. It didn't matter what body carried it.

"Zaliver," I whispered, stiffening.

"What do you think you're doing?" His voice was sharp, cold, disembodied, but suffocating. I tucked a stray strand of hair behind my ear, suddenly aware of everything.

"I-I was just—"

"Not thinking," he cut me off. "That's what you were doing. Did you really believe I'd assign you four guards and not keep an eye on you beyond that? You're being watched, Vivian. Every move."

I glanced around frantically, but nothing seemed out of the ordinary. There was no shadowy figure in a trench coat lurking behind crates or some obvious spy nearby. My jaw tightened.

"Don't you have work to do?" I snapped.

It made perfect sense to try escaping, why wouldn't he expect that? But spying on me? That felt like a betrayal.

"Yes, I do," he answered coolly. "But you keep pulling my attention. I'd like to get through tonight's meeting without being mind-linked that my mate is trying to buy a boat from Old Kenny. So do me a favor and behave. Shop. But don't cause trouble. Do I make myself clear?"

"Crystal," I muttered, cheeks burning as if he were here in person and not speaking through someone else's body.

Then, just as quickly, the silver drained from Luke and the old man's eyes. They blinked, confusion settling over their faces.

Luke touched his forehead. "Whoa. I've only heard of him doing that. Never thought I'd experience it."

The old man looked pale, his hand pressed to his chest like he'd just come back from the dead. I reached toward him, worried.

He flinched and stepped away.

Guess I wouldn't be buying Freedom after all.

"I-I'm so sorry, Luna. I didn't know who you were. I swear I meant no disrespect. Please forgive me. But the Alpha gave strict orders, I can't sell the boat. I-I'm really sorry." The

man's voice shook as badly as his hands. He looked like he was ready to throw himself at my feet, terrified I might accuse him of something worse. Kicking me in the face, maybe?

The funny thing was, hearing him call me Luna didn't unsettle me like I expected. It didn't feel foreign or heavy, it felt natural, like he was just calling me by name.

"It's all right, really," I said softly, offering a half-smile to ease his nerves. "I didn't mean to cause any trouble. I'm just going to go now. Have a good day."

Luke walked beside me as we backed away from the docks, and the second we were clear, a scowl tugged at my lips. Mila, Courtney, and Johnson stood waiting at the edge of the sidewalk. All three of them stared at the ground like guilty pups.

I sighed. "Where did you run off to?" I asked Johnson, raising a brow at him.

He gave me a sheepish grin. "My sister needed help with something nearby. Sorry I didn't ask directly."

I crossed my arms. "And what exactly is there to do in the Bermuda Triangle?"

That made them all glance at each other, eyes glittering with mischief. Mila stepped forward, a devilish grin spreading across her face. "Follow us, Luna."

Something told me I was about to regret asking.

"Beat her ass, man!"

"C'mon, bitch! Show me what you got!"

"Is that booty even moving? I see nothing shaking!"

"Mine's bigger than yours, Court! You better hush before I embarrass you!"

"I'm gonna win!"

"You gonna win these nuts!"

The ridiculous trash-talk echoed around us as Shake It by Metro Station blasted through the arcade speakers. Johnson and I were locked in an intense Wii dance battle, going at it like our lives depended on it. For a solid hour we had been spinning, flailing, and yelling, caught up in the rhythm and the rush of friendly rivalry.

Turns out, Johnson and I were both way too competitive when it came to dancing. The foul language? Just part of the charm. Mila, Courtney, and Luke had parked themselves on the sidelines, cheering, laughing, and occasionally throwing popcorn at us.

They'd taken me to an arcade called Gamers Brawl, and honestly? I hadn't laughed this hard in ages. The tension between us from earlier seemed to melt with each dance round, replaced with lighthearted fun. We'd even drawn a crowd, whether because of our shouting or our sick moves, I wasn't sure. Probably both.

When "WINNER" flashed across the screen under my avatar, Johnson dropped to his knees in dramatic defeat, cursing at the floor like it had betrayed him. Mila and Courtney were practically in tears laughing. Luke chuckled quietly, patting Johnson on the back with an amused smirk.

"Good game, Viv. Even if I'm still convinced you cheated," Johnson said, brushing off his pants as he stood. He reached over and gave me a playful pat on the head before strutting toward Mila with a smirk. "Hey Milaaa."

I rolled my eyes. The on-and-off flirty tension between those two explained a lot. No wonder they were always teasing each other.

Courtney handed me a bottle of water while I wiped sweat from my forehead. "That was awesome. No one's beat him in weeks. You knocked him down a peg."

"Thanks," I said, still catching my breath. "Winning wasn't the goal, but I couldn't pass up the chance to see Johnny the Giant shake his butt."

We both looked over just as Luke tried and failed to steer Johnson away from Mila, who was pretending not to notice him.

"So, your brother," I started, but trailed off as everyone exchanged odd looks.

"What? What is it?" I asked, eyeing their suddenly blank expressions.

Luke stepped forward, his voice calm and serious. "Alpha is ready for you. The meeting begins once you arrive."

The playfulness in his tone was gone. The others stood straighter, their smirks fading. The mood shifted so fast I almost got whiplash. I could feel something heavy in the air, something I couldn't quite name.

"What meeting?" I asked, my heart starting to thump in my chest. "Are we heading there now?"

Johnson nodded, tugging at one of his blond curls. "We're taking you to the Lupus Temple grounds. It's time to meet the pack."

The words didn't fully register until I saw everyone turning and walking toward the edge of the arcade, heading straight into the woods. My feet followed instinctively, but my mind screamed.

"W-Wait! You mean now-now?" My voice cracked slightly.

I wasn't ready. Not even close. I wasn't even in clothes I picked out myself, still wearing whatever had been handed to me earlier. I should've gone shopping like Zaliver suggested. Now I was going to meet a whole pack looking like a tired raccoon.

"Yup. All of them," Johnson said. "Alpha wants to introduce you properly."

My heart pounded harder. This was it. Reality crashed into me like a rogue wave. I wasn't just Zaliver's something. I was his mate. His Luna. And Zaliver wasn't just some Alpha. He was a god.

A god.

Holy. Shit.

Was I dreaming? Was this really my life? What did I do to deserve someone like him? Was I even good enough? There were thousands of women more beautiful, more graceful, more everything than me.

"Do not put yourself down," my wolf snapped in my mind. "We are exactly who we need to be."

"Yeah," I whispered, even though I wasn't convinced. "But what if they hate me? What if I disappoint him?"

"We're here," Luke said, stopping abruptly.

"Ah shit," I muttered.

Because what stood in front of me left me utterly breathless.

Chapter 14: The Temples of the Lupus Deus

Vivian Grey's POV

Back in middle school, I went on a school trip, one of the lucky few chosen to explore the temples in Cambodia. I remember standing there, surrounded by crumbling stone swallowed by thick vines, roots curling through ancient cracks like time itself had gripped the walls. The halls seemed endless, haunting yet serene. The memory never left me.

But what stood before me now made that memory feel small.

Temples. Plural. And they didn't just sit quietly in the distance, they loomed. Arranged almost like pyramids, yet built with a design that didn't belong to any one culture. It was as if a thousand lifetimes of architecture had fused together into one impossible place. Towering spires marked each corner, and sweeping arches connected the structures in impossible ways, like bridges pulled from dreams.

Some walls had crumbled, or maybe had never been built at all. Openings led into shadowed rooms, some without roofs. I caught a glimpse of stairs spiraling into places I couldn't see. The material, part stone, part something brighter, reflected the dying light of the sun, and scattered across the surfaces were hints of color. Jewels. Strange, radiant gemstones embedded in the rock like stars trapped in stone.

It looked like something out of a fantasy novel. Or a hallucination.

"This is some Hogwarts-level magic," I muttered under my breath.

"Breathtaking, isn't it?" Courtney's voice stirred me from my awe. She stood beside me, her tone quiet, like she was afraid to disturb the temples themselves.

I could only nod, eyes still glued to the vision ahead. The setting sun draped everything in warm gold, but I wasn't fooled. Structures like these, ancient and otherworldly, were rarely just beautiful. They carried weight. History. Blood.

Places like this were built for the powerful. And power never came without a price.

Zaliver had three of these.

Three.

My chest tightened. How much darkness did one wolf have to walk through to be given this kind of legacy? Even the gods, Fate, and Mother Luna herself felt small in comparison to what these temples suggested.

What have you done, Zaliver? How deep does your power run?

A subtle cough pulled me back. Luke.

"A few members of the pack will be scattered around," he said carefully. "Our customs aren't quite like those of a normal pack. Alpha wants you by his side tonight. I don't know the full reason why, but stay close. And cautious. Those who get accepted into this pack, well, you'll understand eventually."

I frowned. "The hell does that mean?"

Before he could respond, something changed in his gaze. His eyes flickered, no, bled into shimmering silver.

And then it happened.

A sound cut through the air, low and wild. A cry that wasn't quite a howl but held the same primal command. Power threaded through every note, tugging at something buried in my bones. My wolf pushed forward instantly, her need to answer undeniable.

Zaliver.

He was calling.

Everyone moved, no hesitation, as if the temples themselves had demanded our obedience. I followed the others into the heart of the temple, but unease coiled in my stomach like a second heartbeat. Whatever was waiting inside, I could feel it pressing against the air, ancient and alive.

We walked past towering entrances and pillars that reached for the heavens. And then I saw them.

The wolves.

They stood still, quiet as statues, cloaked in shadows, but their eyes glowed. Liquid silver cut through the night, every gaze trained on me like I'd broken some unspoken rule just by showing up.

They didn't need to say a word. I felt it. The scrutiny. The suspicion.

I was the outsider.

My eyes remained human brown, dull and mortal beside theirs.

They watched me like I was something unnatural. Something other. I didn't need their words to feel the chill they radiated. For the first time in a long while, I wasn't even sure they were wolves.

Something darker was watching me through those eyes.

And I wasn't ready for whatever this night would bring.

The way they stared at me reminded me of how Dean Winchester looked at pie. Intense. Starving. Borderline obsessive.

Head up, I told myself. Don't let them see you flinch. You're the Luna of this pack. Zaliver's mate. Act like it.

With a silent nod of resolve to my wolf, I straightened my spine and stepped forward like I belonged here, like I understood what the hell was going on. Truthfully, I didn't. But no way in hell was I going to let that show.

What I thought was a sea of wolves in their shifted forms turned out to be fewer than I'd assumed. Most of them were in their human bodies, silent and still. Not a word exchanged, yet there was this heavy pulse in the air, like thoughts were flying unseen. Mind-linking. That had to be it. And every so often, one would tilt their head in that eerie way, like they were listening to something I couldn't hear.

Back in most temples, wolves meditated in their shifted forms, communing with the gods, finding peace, or praying for guidance. But Luke's voice echoed in the back of my head, his warning still sharp.

Our customs are different.

So what were these temples for? If Zaliver was the only living god, then what were they worshipping here?

I didn't get to ask. My guards flanked me quietly, guiding me toward what looked like the central gathering point. We moved past curious stares, wolves murmuring silently in their minds as they sized me up.

Who is she?

New?

Outsider?

Threat?

The shadow of the massive temple loomed over us, blocking the moon's glow. I could barely see past the thick woods and jagged rocks surrounding us. It felt hidden, cut off, like something sacred was about to happen, and I was standing in the middle of it with no clue what role I was meant to play.

I kept my gaze low, avoiding direct eye contact, but still taking in every detail around me. The energy here wasn't right. It was too quiet. Too aware.

The guards shifted around me, separating but staying close enough to reach me in a blink. That didn't ease the pressure building in my chest.

I fidgeted from foot to foot, unsettled.

Maybe I was in over my head.

No, scratch that, I definitely was.

This pack had layers. A hidden side that I was only now beginning to see. I didn't understand it, and neither did my wolf. She was prowling just beneath the surface, restless, sniffing at the air for answers. Even the guards were tense, subtle in their movements but unmistakably alert. Like they were waiting for something to begin.

Where are you, Zaliver?

I scanned the shadows, heart thudding a little too fast. I needed him. The only solid thing in this confusing mess. He made me feel not safe, exactly, but less adrift. More grounded.

I was so focused on finding him that I didn't even sense him appear beside me.

When I finally turned my head again, I nearly jumped out of my skin.

"Holy—!" I gasped, stumbling back slightly.

He stood right next to me, Zaliver. My mate. Towering and silent, his broad chest nearly brushing mine. The heat of him, the suddenness of his presence, it hit me like a wall. My heart tried to leap out of my chest.

"Damn! You scared me!" I slapped a hand over my heart, trying to calm my pulse.

He looked down at me, one brow lifted. I was starting to read his expressions better, finally. There was a faint twitch at the corner of his mouth, the barest pull, but it was there. That, paired with the tightness around his eyes, told me exactly what I suspected.

He was amused.

I peeked around him and caught Johnson smirking. Of course he was. The rest of the crowd? Still watching me. Like I was an open book written in a language they didn't quite trust.

"Did I now?" Zaliver asked, his voice low and smooth as he leaned in slightly.

His proximity short-circuited my brain for a second, but I forced myself to breathe, to not shrink away. I squared my shoulders, met his gaze head-on.

"You know you did," I said firmly, then added, "So what's going on?"

I knew he was Alpha. A god, even. But that didn't mean I'd stand here quietly while everyone stared at me like I was prey. My wolf liked that I pushed back. So did I.

His lips twitched again.

Maybe I wasn't just surviving this.

Maybe I was meant to be here.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

Zaliver's gaze lingered on me for a heartbeat longer than I expected, his expression unreadable as ever, before he turned to face the gathered pack. My stomach twisted into a knot. Some of the youngest among them couldn't have been older than thirteen or fourteen. All eyes were locked on him and by extension, me.

From the edge of the crowd, Courtney and Mila both flashed me a wink. Friendly, maybe. Reassuring, possibly. But I had no clue what message they were trying to send. Whatever it was, I didn't have time to decode it.

Zaliver spoke, and like gravity itself had shifted, the entire crowd snapped to attention. Silence dropped around us like a thick, expectant fog. And despite the chaos in my head, I couldn't look away. Watching him command a room, no, an entire pack, was like witnessing a storm in stillness. Beautiful. Terrifying. Unshakable.

"You are all aware of the recent raids our pack has conducted," he began, voice calm yet absolute. "I'm here to confirm their suspension."

A low ripple of surprise moved through the crowd, but no one dared speak.

"Eighteen years ago," he continued, "I received a message. A prophecy, if you will. That a child, a girl, would be born. And that she would one day be mine."

My breath caught. My pulse pounded in my ears.

"I didn't believe it then. Not until a few years ago, when things began to align. And now," he paused, and the entire forest seemed to hold its breath, "I'm here to confirm that the prophecy was true."

My stomach dropped.

Wait, what?

The raids were about me?

I stood there, trying to process that. Eighteen years ago, before I could even walk, before I had any say in any of this, something or someone had already written me into Zaliver's story. The raids, the packs torn apart, the she-wolves collected and released, the terror my own mother had felt when she woke me up in the dark to run, all of it traced back to a prophecy about me. A girl who had no idea she existed in anyone's plans but her own.

I didn't know whether to feel chosen or cornered. Probably both.

Someone predicted I was meant for Zaliver?

I didn't know how to feel about that. Confused? Pressured? A little sick?

"I present to you," Zaliver said, taking a deliberate step to the side, "my mate Vivian Grey. Your Luna."

All eyes snapped to me.

The weight of it hit differently than I expected. Not a gentle settling, more like something dropping from a great height and landing square on my chest. A hundred silver gazes, all at once, all on me. I felt every single one of them.

And I knew what they saw: a girl with messy brown hair, dark circles under her eyes, still wearing sweatpants because no one warned me that I'd be announced like this today. I looked like I had just rolled out of bed and wandered into a supernatural summit. Which, honestly, wasn't that far from the truth.

I forced a smile. The kind that felt stretched too tight. I avoided eye contact, especially with those piercing silver eyes. I didn't dare open myself to their minds either, not now. I wasn't ready to hear what they were thinking. I was barely holding onto my own thoughts.

Was I even Luna material?

Zaliver may have accepted me as his mate and introduced me to the pack, but I wasn't blind to the weight that came with that title. Luna. It sounded regal. Powerful. But me?

I'd never been good with leadership. In school projects, I was either bossy and controlling or completely detached and still bossy. It wasn't that I didn't care. I just didn't know how to lead people without falling apart inside.

Power and I? We didn't mix well.

Zaliver stepped closer, casting his tall shadow over me. Next to him, I probably looked like a lost fan trying to take a picture with a basketball legend. His presence made the crowd visibly soften, expressions shifting from wary to something warmer. Well, most of them.

There was one girl in the crowd whose glare could've melted steel. Yeah, I saw you.

Zaliver didn't acknowledge her. Instead, he raised his voice again. "To celebrate, the pack will have a full-pack hunt tonight."

The effect was instant. Eyes lit up across the gathering, excitement rippling like wildfire. A full-pack hunt? That was rare. Dangerous. Usually banned, unless it was under tight control. Too many wolves in one hunt led to bloodlust, chaos, destruction. In the human world, that kind of thing could expose us.

But then I remembered, this wasn't the human world.

Zaliver owned this entire island. And it wasn't just any island, it was practically the size of a state. A place where wolves could run free without hiding.

He had no limits here.

"That's all you need to know," he said smoothly. "This changes nothing. Our plans remain unchanged. Spread the word. Enjoy."

Just like that, it was over.

My mind was still catching up when he reached for me and pulled me into him. His touch was firm, grounding, right as the entire pack burst into movement, wolves rushing off toward the forest in flashes of fur and wild energy. A few lingered, watching me, but Zaliver growled, low and commanding.

They vanished in an instant.

He let go of my arm, stepping back slightly, his attention drawn toward the dark treeline.

He was watching something.

Or someone.

His jaw had tightened, almost imperceptibly, the way it did when he was calculating something rather than reacting to it. Whatever was out there, he'd already sensed it before the pack dispersed. Maybe before we even arrived.

My wolf growled softly inside me, her hackles rising. She didn't like it. Whatever or whoever he was sensing, she didn't trust it. And lately, her instincts had been sharper than mine.

I followed his gaze into the darkness between the trees, and for just a second, I thought I saw something shift. A shadow that moved when nothing else did.

Then it was gone.

Or it had never been there at all.

"Zaliver," I said quietly.

He didn't answer. But his hand found my wrist in the dark, and he held it.

That was answer enough.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

And still, Zaliver said nothing. He didn't bark orders or shout commands like other alphas might have. He didn't need to.

His word was command. No one questioned him. Not because they feared punishment, but because they wouldn't dare. His power was something ancient. Something more.

Something godlike.

And I was standing right beside him, trying to figure out what being his Luna really meant.

"Zaliver, can we talk?"

I didn't expect him to react so quickly or so sharply. His blue eyes snapped toward me, and for a second, they looked darker, heavier. Like storm clouds gathering.

"About what?" he asked, voice dipped in something low and husky that sent a shiver straight down my spine.

I opened my mouth and then promptly forgot how to speak. "Uh, well, uh..."

Brilliant.

I cleared my throat, trying to shake the fog his voice stirred in me. Why did he always manage to short-circuit my brain just by talking?

"About all of this," I finally managed. "I don't know what's going to happen next, but I'm not okay just blindly following you around. You told them things I wasn't ready to hear, and I'm standing here totally in the dark. I deserve to know more."

Without a word, Zaliver reached out and grabbed my arm, pulling me against his chest in one smooth, confident motion. His arms wrapped around me, firm and warm, and suddenly my palms were flat against his chest. My heart practically launched itself into overdrive.

Too much. Too close. Too everything.

He felt like a wall of heat and muscle, unmovable, unstoppable. My entire body was buzzing.

"Hold your breath," he said suddenly.

"What?" I blinked up at him.

"Just hold your breath." His voice was serious, but calm.

Suspicious, I narrowed my eyes at him. "You better make this quick," I muttered. "Or I'll either pass out or die from the fact that your abs are too close to my face."

"Good," he replied, completely ignoring my rambling.

The world shifted.

A sudden gust of wind whipped around us, wild and powerful. My hair went flying, slapping across my face. Instinctively, I clenched my fists in his shirt and pressed into him to stay upright. His chest vibrated under my hands, he was either laughing or purring. I honestly didn't know which I wanted more.

"Breathe."

I sucked in air like I'd just been yanked out of a pool. Not at all attractively, by the way. I probably sounded like those dramatic fans gasping after hearing Zayn left One Direction. I'd literally witnessed that exact meltdown with Mila earlier.

When the dizziness passed and I stopped gasping like a fish out of water, I realized something strange.

We were no longer outside.

I stood very still for a moment, just blinking. The temple grounds, the night air, the wolves, all of it was gone. In its place were familiar walls, the sleek black couch, the too-expensive everything of his living room. My brain tried to reconcile what my eyes were seeing with what physics said should be possible, and came up completely empty.

"What? Wait." I spun around slowly. "We were just outside. In the middle of a forest. With an entire pack. How are we suddenly in the living room?"

Zaliver walked over to the couch and sank into it like a king on his throne, legs stretched out, looking far too comfortable after teleporting, or whatever the hell that just was.

"I ran," he said with a shrug. "Some pack members were trying to eavesdrop. I didn't want them hearing this."

He said it so casually. Like running fast enough to blur reality was just something he did on a Tuesday. I stared at him for a long moment, mouth slightly open, then decided I didn't have the bandwidth to unpack that right now.

He leaned back, resting an arm over his head, and that's when I noticed.

His biceps.

Dear Luna. I was definitely looking longer than necessary.

Focus, Vivian.

I crossed my arms and stood over him. "So, are you going to answer my questions now? Or should I just start interrogating you with a frying pan next time?"

He sighed.

"Fine," he muttered. "The way I see it, you're mine. So you stay with me. I'm not letting you leave unless I'm with you. Your life is here now, on this island, with me. I'm not going to lie or sugarcoat things. I don't know what the gods had planned when they sent me a mate, but I do know one thing."

He paused.

"I'm stronger than them."

That made my blood boil.

"Than them?" I snapped, fists tightening at my sides. "Who the hell are you talking about, Zaliver?"

Rage built inside me, hot and sharp. I was so done. Done being a piece in a game I hadn't agreed to play. Done being handed from one set of hands to another, gods or otherwise, like I didn't have thoughts and feelings and a life I'd been in the middle of living. I had a mother who'd kissed me goodbye in the dark and told me to run. I had a cousin who'd been attacked because of me. I had plans, a future, things I wanted, and none of them had included being claimed by a six-hundred-year-old god on an island hidden inside the Bermuda Triangle.

"I had feelings," I said, quieter than I meant to, the anger dropping into something rawer underneath. "I have a voice. And I am so tired of being kept in the dark like I don't matter."

He growled softly, frustration rippling across his face as he closed his eyes.

"They," he said through gritted teeth, "are known to you as Fate and Mother Luna. That's all I can say. Because that's all you know of them."

Fate. And Mother Luna.

I reeled.

That was not what I expected. My jaw nearly hit the floor.

If anyone else had dared to speak of our gods so casually, with that much cold certainty, I would have been furious. Disgusted, even. The Moon Goddess wasn't just a deity to us. She was the source. The reason any of us had wolves at all, the reason mates existed, the reason I'd spent my whole life believing the bond was sacred.

And Zaliver had just named her like an opponent.

But this was Zaliver.

My mate.

The one who stood above alphas. The one who had three temples on a hidden island and a pack that bowed without being asked. The one whose power was old enough that even the gods had felt the need to wipe his memory clean.

And suddenly, I wasn't sure who I was more afraid of.

Fate and Mother Luna, who had apparently been moving pieces around a board I couldn't see.

Or him, who was apparently strong enough to move back.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

I was starting to understand that being around Zaliver meant preparing myself for the unexpected, for the intensity, and for the differences between us. He came from a world I didn't fully grasp, a life filled with truths I hadn't even begun to uncover. Truths about this world. Maybe even about myself. I narrowed my eyes at him, lips pressed tightly together, but held back from pressing further.

"So, what happens now with this whole mate thing?" I asked, sarcasm lacing my voice as I planted my hands on my hips. "Are we supposed to just stay on opposite ends of this island? You take your side, and I take mine?"

I caught the flicker of amusement on his face, the way his lips curved slightly. My wolf stirred restlessly inside me, uncertain whether we should respond to that smile or resist it.

"Technically," he began, "both sides are mine, I do own the island, after all. But if it makes you feel better, no. You'll be wherever I am." He tilted his head slightly, as if considering something deeper. "I won't deny our bond. We are mates. But what we are, it's a mystery even to me. The big bad wolf god and an eighteen-year-old pup. What an unlikely match."

He closed his eyes, voice drifting into something thoughtful, soft almost. It was rare to see him like that. For a moment, I wondered if he realized he was lowering his guard, even just a little. It made me feel like I was seeing a piece of him not many ever did.

"Is that supposed to be a good thing or a bad thing?" I asked carefully. "Because here's the deal, I'm no Juliet. If you can't accept me as I am because of something you refuse to explain, I'll go find my own Romeo."

His eyes snapped open. Gone was the blue, replaced by a void of black that sent a jolt through me. Before I could blink, he was in front of me. I yelped as he pressed forward, backing me up until something cushioned the back of my knees. I stumbled slightly, falling back onto what I assumed was a couch. He leaned over me, his scent surrounding me, his presence swallowing the room.

"Let that be the last time you even joke about another man," he growled, his voice low and fierce. "I don't share, little one. If someone even thinks of touching what's mine, I'll tear him apart in front of you. So you never forget who you belong to."

His face was inches from mine, pupils retracting as burning blue took over.

"And then," he whispered, voice like wildfire against my skin, "I'll make sure you remember whose touch you crave."

Oh. My. Goddess.

I lay there for a second after he pulled back, genuinely unable to move. Not out of fear, though there was plenty of that underneath everything, but because my entire body had just staged a full mutiny. Heart hammering, cheeks burning, fingertips tingling where I'd gripped the couch cushion. I was five seconds away from doing something I absolutely could not take back, and some tiny, barely functioning part of my brain was the only thing that had stopped me.

When he finally walked away and settled back onto the other couch, I nearly sagged in relief. I needed a moment, just a single moment, to push down the flush in my cheeks, to pretend I hadn't been five seconds from throwing myself at him. My body was not on the same page as my brain. While I tried to act calm, it was screaming, "Claim me. Right now."

I should've been terrified by his threat. Maybe part of me even wanted to be. But the bigger truth? I found comfort in his possessiveness. Not in an unhealthy way. It was something primal, deeply wolf. He didn't want to let me go. And my wolf, she liked that.

"Well," he said, dusting off his hands like we'd just handled something trivial. "Now that we've got that settled—"

"Wait." I shot up, waving a hand. "What exactly am I supposed to do here? And what about my family?"

His expression shifted, emptying out like someone pulled the curtain closed behind his eyes. My chest tightened.

Did that mean I wouldn't see them again?

"I guess tomorrow, you can spend the day with me," he said casually, like he hadn't just sent my thoughts into a tailspin. "As for your family, I'll consider it."

"Consider it?" I echoed in disbelief.

He ignored my tone, standing and making his way toward me. He offered his hand. I stared at it for a second, then took it, letting him pull me to my feet. We started walking down the hallway, slow and quiet, toward what I assumed would be my room.

Though that raised another issue. I remembered very clearly saying I would not be sleeping in the same bed as him. Not because I thought he'd cross a line, but because I was terrified I would. Honestly, if anyone would be getting handsy, it would be me. I was trying to save myself from doing something embarrassingly bold. Judging by how often he'd touched me lately, I wasn't even sure he'd stop me if I tried.

The hallway felt longer than it had before. Or maybe I was just more aware of him beside me, the warmth of his hand around mine, the quiet between us that wasn't quite comfortable but wasn't hostile either. It was something in between that I didn't have a name for yet.

"And the girls?" I asked, keeping my voice steady. "The ones taken by this pack. Lily. What happened to them?"

"They were returned," he said without emotion. "Once it was clear they weren't my mate, I sent them back to their packs. Sometimes one of my men would find his mate among them. In those cases, I'd allow the girl to stay." His tone darkened slightly. "As for your cousin, I've been told she's doing fine. Or as fine as an alpha-less pack can be."

I stopped walking.

Alpha-less.

The word landed like a stone dropped into still water, the ripples spreading out slow and cold through my chest. Gwen's pack had lost their Alpha in the attack. The same attack that had brought me here. The same night everything had changed. And while I'd been arguing about college and stealing Zaliver's underwear and winning Wii dance battles, Gwen had been holding together a fractured pack without a leader.

I stared at the floor for a moment, jaw tight, throat thicker than I wanted it to be.

"Is she safe?" I asked, quieter now.

He glanced at me sideways. "She's alive."

It wasn't the same thing, and we both knew it. But it was all he offered, and for now, it had to be enough.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

A small shiver worked its way down my spine. His words weren't cruel, but they carried an edge that made me wonder just how far he was willing to go for the things or people he claimed as his.

And now, it seemed, that included me.

"What do you mean by alpha-less?" I asked, though deep down, I already had a sinking feeling about what he meant.

Zaliver didn't answer right away. His gaze stayed forward as we walked down the quiet corridor. The faint echo of snores drifted through the air now and then, soft reminders that this place never truly slept.

Lily's voice echoed in my mind. "Alpha disrespected him."

A sharp pang of understanding hit me.

The Blue Moon Alpha. He must have challenged Zaliver during the raid, or said something, done something that Zaliver had taken as a slight. And Zaliver, being who and what he was, wouldn't have let that pass. Not in front of his men. Not ever.

Which meant Gwen's pack had lost their Alpha because of a night that had ultimately been about me. Because someone had come looking for me, and the Alpha of Blue Moon had been in the way.

"Oh," I whispered, the word coming out smaller than I intended.

Alphas were known for their pride, their need to dominate and command respect. If a regular alpha reacted violently to disrespect, how would the alpha of all alphas respond? Zaliver wasn't the type to forget or forgive easily. I knew that much already.

Still, I felt relief wash over me knowing Lily was safe. That had been nagging at me since I passed out. Not knowing what happened to her had been like an itch I couldn't reach.

We came to a familiar door and Zaliver stopped. I tensed when his hands gripped my hips.

"No way," I said quickly, stepping back.

He turned to me, a smirk playing on his lips. "Why not? You're my mate. You belong with me. That means you sleep beside me."

And just like that, he opened the door and not-so-gently shoved me inside.

"Rude," I muttered under my breath, brushing past him.

As I crossed the room and sat on the edge of the bed, a sharp poke reminded me of something. Reaching into my pocket, I pulled out the black credit card and handed it to him.

"Here."

He took it with a glance, kicking off his boots with practiced ease. "Ah, yes. Your little boat stunt today." His tone turned mocking. "Don't try anything like that again unless you want to end up like Rapunzel."

He walked to the bedside table and placed the card down. One by one, he emptied his pockets, keys, phone, and a ridiculously thick wallet.

"You mean free and back with my family?" I teased, even though the image of being locked away wasn't exactly a stretch.

He snorted without humor. "No. I mean locked in a tower with nothing but a pet lizard for company."

He disappeared into the bathroom, door wide open, like modesty wasn't even a concept in his world. I took the opportunity and went to work immediately. I pulled back the covers on the left side of the bed, then went around collecting every single pillow I could find, from the couch, the armchair, even the decorative ones that looked like they'd never been touched. I stacked them down the center of the bed in a neat, deliberate wall.

It wasn't exactly the Great Wall of China, but it was something. It was mine.

I claimed the side closest to the door, sat back, and crossed my arms. If he didn't like it, he could sleep on the floor.

When he came out of the bathroom, his damp hair clung to his forehead and his bare chest glistened slightly in the low light. I quickly turned around, pretending to adjust the pillows. My face felt warm. The bed, clearly made for his large frame, made me feel like a child curling up in a giant's space.

"Well, isn't that adorable," he said, clearly amused.

I didn't reply. He moved around the room for a while before the lights flicked off, plunging everything into darkness. I lay on my side, facing the door, clutching my pillow like it could protect me. My breathing was shaky, loud enough that he probably heard every inhale and exhale. My blood rushed too fast. My toes wiggled uncontrollably, a small outlet for the anxious energy still bottled up inside me.

No matter how tired I felt, my thoughts wouldn't settle. The day had been overwhelming. I was overwhelmed.

"I can hear your eyes moving," Zaliver's voice broke the silence.

I flinched. "And?" I said defensively.

"Go to sleep. We've got a long day ahead of us," he murmured.

Easier said than done.

Still, his voice had a way of grounding me, even if I didn't want to admit it. I let the silence stretch, breathing slower.

But one question still clung to my mind. I couldn't let it go.

"Hey, Zaliver?" I whispered.

He groaned. "What now?"

"That time, when you told your pack you didn't believe it when someone told you that you had a mate. What did you mean by that?"

Silence.

I almost thought he'd fallen asleep, or just decided not to answer. But then, after what felt like an eternity, he spoke, his voice low and heavy in the dark.

"Because people like me, people this twisted, don't get mates." His tone was flat. "Now go to sleep before I make you."

I stared into the darkness long after the words had landed.

People like me. People this twisted.

He'd said it so matter-of-factly, like it was something he'd accepted a long time ago, something he'd stopped fighting. Like the idea of being loved, of being someone's person,

had never been on the table for him. Not because he didn't want it, but because he'd genuinely believed he didn't deserve it.

And that, quietly and without warning, broke something open in my chest.

"Goodnight then," I whispered, my voice coming out softer than I intended.

At some point, I must've drifted off. But even in my half-asleep haze, I felt him moving. The pillows I'd stacked so carefully were slowly pulled away, one by one. Then his arms wrapped around me and pulled me close. I let out a sleepy protest, but it was weak and useless and we both knew it.

He rolled us gently until his body was between me and the door. Even half-asleep, I knew what that meant. He was protecting me. Positioning himself as the thing between me and any harm that might come through.

"I should have known," I mumbled, my words muffled against his chest.

I felt him chuckle softly, his chest rumbling against my cheek. And I think, just maybe, he nuzzled the side of my face before resting his chin on top of my head.

"Of course you should've," he murmured. "What's mine belongs here in my arms. You, little mate, belong to this wolf god."

I was too tired to argue. And honestly, tucked against his warmth with his arms steady around me, I wasn't sure I wanted to.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

"I'm sorry, what?" I blinked at Zaliver, spoon halfway to my mouth, stunned by the words that had just come out of his.

We had just finished breakfast. I'd woken up to find him watching me again, his gaze intense and unreadable like always. After a quick shower, I'd pulled on one of his shirts, long enough to pass for a dress, and judging by the smug little curl at the corner of his mouth, he really liked that. But now, sitting here, with my stomach full and his scent wrapped around me, he had the audacity to drop that bomb.

"We need to go to the doctor," he repeated calmly, as if it were no big deal.

I squinted at him, sure I had misheard. "Excuse me?" I asked, slow and deliberate, even though my wolf was already bristling.

His face was unreadable, but there was a flicker of something, guilt or hesitation, before he looked away toward the window. "Your blood needs to be tested."

My jaw dropped. "Tested?" I echoed. "For what?"

Was he seriously implying something? I nearly choked on the rest of the air in my lungs. Was this about some kind of disease? My wolf snarled indignantly at the idea, ready to tear into him for the insult.

Zaliver cleared his throat. "I just want to check on your health. And other things."

"Other things," I repeated, voice dry and laced with suspicion.

Other things. The phrase sat there between us like a sealed box I wasn't allowed to open. Was he checking for something specific? Some condition tied to being his mate? Some side effect of the bond neither of us fully understood yet? My wolf went quiet, listening, as if she might already know the answer and was choosing not to share. I thought about pushing him on it, demanding he just tell me plainly what he was looking for. But something in the set of his jaw told me I'd get another non-answer, and I was tired of those before the day had even properly started.

The confusion must've been all over my face, because he turned to me again, his eyes impossibly blue, the kind of blue that always made me forget my anger for a second longer than I should. Not this time.

"So, are you saying there's something wrong with my health?" I narrowed my eyes at him, already seeing the trap I was laying and praying he'd walk straight into it.

He narrowed his own, probably realizing it too. "Oh no. I know this trick. Females lay this trap all the time for their mates. I'm not falling for it."

A laugh escaped me before I could stop it. He was right, but I wouldn't admit that aloud. "Fine," I grumbled, pushing my chair back.

As I reached for my plate, he zipped past, took both our dishes, dumped them into the sink, and reappeared beside me like it was nothing. Super speed. Show-off.

"Thanks," I muttered, caught between appreciation and annoyance.

He just nodded and led me out the back of the house.

And that's when I realized it wasn't just a house.

It was a sprawling mansion, practically a fortress, with layers I hadn't even seen from the inside. Some of the outer walls had sleek white panels mixed with stone and warm wood accents, modern and ancient pressed together in a way that shouldn't have worked but somehow did. There was a section that looked like it had been carved out of pure black brick, darker than the rest, older somehow. The grounds stretched further than I could track, trees pressing close on all sides, the air thick and clean the way only places untouched by city noise ever smelled. Underneath it all, I could sense depth, a heaviness in the ground that suggested hidden floors buried far below the surface.

The whole place felt like a secret that had been kept for centuries. Which, knowing Zaliver, it probably had been.

We were heading toward a wide, flat building with two huge doors. A garage.

"Where exactly are we going?" I asked, falling into step beside him.

"I could've just taken us straight to the doctor's office," he said without turning, "but I thought you might prefer to actually see the route rather than just blink and be there."

My gaze dropped involuntarily to the way his jeans hugged him just right as he moved, his gait full of silent power. My fingers twitched. I quickly folded my arms before they did something stupid.

My brain unhelpfully recalled how he looked fresh out of the shower earlier, towel low on his hips, water dripping down every inch of carved muscle. I was dangerously close to drooling, and he hadn't even said a word. Then he'd smirked and disappeared behind that traitorous towel.

Ugh.

I snapped my eyes upward just in time to catch a wicked grin curling on his lips. He knew. He definitely knew.

And today he was all in black again, as if that wasn't already his trademark. But this time he'd thrown on a black leather jacket, and suddenly he looked like some dark prince straight out of a forbidden fantasy, if the fantasy came with sharp claws and a body count.

I shook myself out of the haze, but unease settled in the pit of my stomach. He wasn't just a hot alpha with a temper and a mansion. He was something else entirely.

Zaliver wasn't just the Lupus Deus by name. He was the stuff of ancient legends, wolf god, immortal, feared and worshipped across every pack that had ever existed. In the stories whispered between older wolves, he was merciless and untouchable, a force of nature wearing skin. But the male walking beside me didn't feel like that. Not yet. He was intense, yes, possessive and cautious and occasionally cold, but I hadn't seen the side the stories warned about. Not truly.

Aside from the strange Latin murmurs and his inhuman speed, he seemed almost like a powerful alpha.

Almost.

And that word, almost, was doing a lot of work. Because almost meant there was still a version of him I hadn't met. A version the stories knew better than I did. And the closer I got to trusting the man beside me, the more that possibility sat quietly in the back of my mind, waiting.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian Grey's POV

And yet I knew nothing about him. Not really. Not what set him off, not what made him dangerous, or what he saw when he looked at me like he wanted to devour the whole world just to keep me safe inside it.

And now he was taking me to get my blood drawn for "other things."

Yeah. I had a lot of questions.

"Hey Zaliver, can I ask you some questions?" I ventured, but he didn't so much as glance at me.

Well. That was expected, but still mildly insulting.

We reached the garage just as I was trying to figure out how to phrase the next question. Zaliver grabbed the bottom handle of the steel door and yanked it up without warning. The thing flew upward and slammed into the ceiling with a jarring clang. I jumped, startled. He finally turned to look at me but I kept my eyes forward, too stunned by what stood in front of me.

There it was. A dark red Chevrolet Camaro with a sleek black racing stripe slicing through the middle like it owned the world.

My jaw nearly hit the ground.

My heart skipped a beat. No, several. I didn't care what kind of strange energy was in the air, didn't care what Zaliver's silent mood meant. My entire focus was on that car. I needed to touch it. I needed to sit in it. Smell it. Drive it. Merge souls with it.

Slowly, like I was approaching a wild animal, I took careful steps forward, hand outstretched as reverently as if I were about to touch some sacred relic. My fingers grazed the hood, cool, smooth, and absolutely perfect, and I swear I got emotional. I might've even teared up a little as I ran my hand across the polished surface.

"I think you like the car," Zaliver's voice broke through, low and amused. It dragged me back to reality like a hook behind the ribs. I flinched and pulled my hand back like I'd been caught stealing.

He was watching me with that usual unreadable expression, but I felt a strange tug deep inside me. Not mine exactly, but familiar. A flare of pride, maybe. His?

I decided to ignore the weird sensation stirring between us and focused instead on not making a fool of myself. "It's beautiful," I said with a small shrug. "What's not to like? So,

we're taking this one, right?" My tone was hopeful, borderline desperate, but I had no shame. This was the car.

He lifted the black key fob between two fingers and gave it a casual wave.

I couldn't help it. I squealed. Out loud. Like a child on sugar.

Rushing over, I reached for the door handle. But of course, Zaliver got there first, materializing behind me like some shadowy phantom. His hand slid over mine on the handle, warm and firm.

"Allow me," he murmured, leaning in just enough for his breath to graze my ear.

My lungs forgot how to breathe for a second. I stepped aside quickly, hoping he hadn't noticed how my heart had tripped over itself. Figures. Just when I thought I could enjoy the car, he had to make it weirdly intense again.

I know something else he can open for us, my wolf muttered, sounding far too pleased with herself.

I choked on my own breath, coughing in surprise. What the hell? She was getting bold.

I climbed inside, thankful for the distraction. The leather interior was pristine, smelling like it had just rolled off the assembly line. I inhaled deeply. That intoxicating new car scent hit me, only slightly tinged with Zaliver's natural musk. It was subtle, maybe he hadn't driven it much, or maybe it was brand new.

He got in beside me, shut the door, and started the engine. The low, deep purr sent a thrill through me.

I glanced sideways. He wasn't doing anything. Just sitting there, staring forward.

"What's the hold-up?" I asked, curious. "Waiting for someone?"

He didn't answer right away. Just adjusted the seat, pushing it back awkwardly. His long legs barely fit. He looked comically cramped, which was ironic given his usual aura of untouchable power. I almost felt sorry for him. Almost.

"Seatbelt," he said instead.

I clicked mine on without argument.

"And what about you?" I raised an eyebrow at him. He hadn't even reached for his.

His lips curved faintly, not quite a smile. "The island roads are safer than most. I don't need one. But you," his gaze flickered toward me, brief but intense, "I want you wearing it."

"Hmph. Suit yourself. If you go flying through the windshield, I'm not catching you," I muttered, crossing my arms. But despite the grumble, I couldn't shake the small flutter in my chest at the protectiveness in his tone.

We pulled out of the garage and onto a smooth road that wound through the island like it had been laid down with care rather than necessity. Trees lined either side, thick and green, their branches arching overhead to filter the light into something soft and dappled. People moved along the footpaths, some in pairs, some alone. They looked ordinary from a distance, the kind of ordinary that made you forget, just for a second, that you were on a hidden island in the Bermuda Triangle surrounded by wolves who bowed to a god.

I watched a small girl chase a dog across a stretch of grass and felt something loosen in my chest. Whatever this place was, people actually lived here. Not just survived it.

My mind drifted back to the question I'd been trying to form since breakfast. Which one did I lead with? There were too many. What exactly was he testing my blood for? Who were they, really, beyond a name? What happened to him in those blank years the gods had wiped clean? What did he actually want from me, underneath all the possession and the cold distance?

I still hadn't decided when he broke the silence.

"Sure," he said, out of nowhere.

I blinked, turning to look at him from the corner of my eye. "What?"

He didn't repeat himself. But I realized what he meant. He was answering my earlier question, the one he'd ignored completely when I'd asked it outside the garage.

I could ask him questions.

Finally.

I sat with that for a moment, watching the road ahead, feeling the weight of everything I'd been storing up since the night my mother woke me in the dark and told me to run. I had the answers within reach now. I just had to figure out which question I was brave enough to ask first.