

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna chapter 111-120

Chapter 111: The Burden of Power

Vivian's POV

Lost in my not-so-innocent daydream, I didn't even notice when he turned around and walked over to me, a plate in his hands and a cocky smirk plastered across his face. By the time I realized he was standing directly in front of me, I was already blushing furiously.

"Today's breakfast," he announced proudly, "includes French toast with cinnamon, fresh fruit salad, orange juice... and a very willing mate on the side."

I choked on my own spit.

"I'll take everything but the last one, thanks," I muttered quickly, grabbing the plate from his hands and focusing very, very hard on the food.

He leaned against the counter beside me, his piercing eyes gleaming with pure amusement.

"Are you sure?" he asked, his voice low and teasing as he leaned in a little closer.

My breath caught in my throat. "Yeah," I squeaked out.

Zaliver pulled back slowly, clearly enjoying the chaotic effect he had on me. "Alright. Later then."

I glanced up from under my dark lashes and mumbled, "Definitely later."

The shift in his expression was immediate: surprise, heat, and something softer flickered through his eyes. He looked almost boyish for a second, completely caught off guard by my response. It made my heart trip over itself in my chest.

But before either of us could say anything else, a sharp knock came at the front door. I leapt up faster than a guilty pup and dashed out of the kitchen.

When I opened the door, Algebra was standing there, arms crossed over his chest and green eyes narrowed sharply at me. He did not look pleased.

"Hello, Algebra!" I said cheerily, stepping aside to let him inside.

He pointed a finger at me in mock outrage. "You've made my job twenty times harder. Stop that."

I rolled my eyes. "Nice to see you too."

Zaliver walked out of the kitchen then, shirtless glory and all, and gave Algebra a mildly irritated look. His gaze flicked between us as Algebra handed him a heavy black messenger bag.

"Thanks. How's everything?" Zaliver asked, pulling out a laptop and a stack of folders. One particularly thick black folder caught my eye, labeled **Private** in bold red lettering.

"Everything's smooth. Except for the part where your mate makes you forget your own work," Algebra muttered, shooting me a sharp look. "Vivian, let the man focus. Now I'm stuck doing his job. I've got a life, you know."

Zaliver growled low under his breath. "Shut up."

I grinned. "Aren't betas supposed to be able to handle alpha responsibilities?"

Algebra scoffed dramatically. "Yeah, for normal alphas. Not for the Alpha of all Alphas. I'm just a beta. One of many."

Wait... one of many?

I turned to Zaliver, who was already scanning a document. "You have more betas?"

He didn't look up as he answered. "Every pack has one. I assign them based on compatibility. They handle the day-to-day tasks the alpha can't or won't. They know everything their alphas do, sometimes more. They report directly to me. If a pack's alpha starts slipping, I decide whether they stay... or go."

His voice was calm, but the sheer weight behind it made my spine straighten. There was no mistaking it: Zaliver wasn't just playing leader. He was the system. The enforcer. The judge.

And suddenly, breakfast didn't feel quite as lighthearted anymore.

"Oh," I said dumbly, blinking as a soft throbbing pressed against the inside of my skull. It wasn't sharp enough to complain about, more like a distant echo—a dull rhythm tapping from within. It reminded me of someone rapping their fingers on glass: curious, insistent, and impossible to ignore.

My wolf huffed at the sensation, clearly irritated by the noise. Before I could unravel what it meant, Algebra's voice yanked me out of my spiraling thoughts.

"See! Everyone always forgets about the beta. We get overlooked like we don't do anything around here, but we're busting our asses too. Now with his royal pain gone, I've got twice the work. C'mon, Luna, throw a guy a bone," he grumbled dramatically.

Zaliver smacked the back of his head—and definitely not playfully, either. I winced a little on Algebra's behalf.

"Damn! That actually hurt!" Algebra whined, rubbing the back of his head with a pained grimace. "You see this? Abuse of power! And the worst part? I can't even report you because you'd probably kill me. Dead. Just for laughs."

Still muttering under his breath, he turned on his heel and made for the front door. "Later, losers."

I watched him disappear down the hall before glancing at Zaliver, who just stood there shaking his head in exasperation.

"Your beta's weird," I said bluntly.

"I know. But he's loyal and good at what he does. That's why I keep him around," Zaliver said dryly, his attention drifting right back to the mountain of papers in his hand.

"Are you actually gonna work through all that?" I asked, eyeing the intimidating stack. Just looking at it made me want to run in the opposite direction.

"I was going to. Unless you—"

I cut him off with a firm shake of my head. No way I was going to distract him now. He already had enough on his plate, and if Algebra returned to find him slacking, I'd probably be the one getting blamed for it.

"Go ahead," I said. "I'm gonna keep myself busy."

Without waiting for his response, I turned and headed back toward the kitchen, finishing the last of my food before slipping upstairs.

In our room, I changed clothes, frowning slightly, though I wasn't sure why. Something just didn't sit right. I felt unsettled, restless in a way that went deeper than simple boredom. After a minute of pacing the floor, I decided I'd go for a swim. Why not? The pool was part of the house and, so far, had been tragically neglected. Might as well enjoy it.

I picked out one of the only bikinis I could actually wear with confidence: deep midnight blue on top, tied around my neck and back, while the bottoms were solid black from behind and blue in front. Over it, I pulled on a sheer, flowy cover-up that fell loosely around my knees. Grabbed a dry towel. Found some flip-flops. Made my way back downstairs.

Chapter 112: Ripples in the Water

Vivian's POV

Zaliver wasn't anywhere in sight not in the main living room or the surrounding hallways. I figured he had a private home office tucked away somewhere deep in the house to handle his pack affairs.

Outside, I dropped my towel and sandals onto a lounge chair, slipped off the sheer cover-up, and tugged the band from my hair, letting my fingers comb through the tangled strands. I sighed in pure relief as I massaged my scalp; ponytails were cute until they turned into a literal, pounding headache.

The sudden thought of Zaliver seeing me out here in this bikini made me intensely self-conscious. My stomach twisted into nervous knots. Still, I pushed through the hesitation. I'd spent enough of my life trapped inside safe comfort zones; I wasn't about to shrink back now. And besides... he was my mate. He was naturally drawn to me. That bond was a biological guarantee of attraction, wasn't it?

I kept repeating that exact phrase to myself like a protective shield.

He's my mate. He wants me. If he doesn't like what he sees screw him. I'm beautiful.

The internal mantra helped. Sort of. Even though I knew deep down that if he ever did say something negative about my body, I'd probably be completely shattered.

I jumped into the pool without overthinking it, instantly regretting the sudden splash as cold water rushed over my skin. I came up sputtering and laughing to myself, goosebumps

prickling along my arms. But soon enough, the initial chill faded and the gentle warmth of the overhead sun took over. It was the perfect day for a swim: bright, calm, and incredibly soothing.

I dipped under the crystal surface again, letting the heavy silence of the water drown out my racing thoughts for a few precious seconds. When I came back up, I leaned lazily against the tiled edge of the pool, letting my fingers skim the surface, watching the small ripples chase each other across the blue water.

Algebra's earlier dramatic outburst echoed in my mind. He was right about one thing: Zaliver's forced isolation had real consequences. Keeping him housebound was actively affecting others too. I hadn't really thought about that side of things. Sure, he could physically leave the property whenever he wanted to. He was the almighty Lupus Deus, after all. But he didn't... simply because I had asked him not to.

Was I just being petty? Was this whole thing just me trying to "teach him a lesson"? Did that make me look childish?

I sighed heavily and stared deeper into the clear water.

I was slowly pulling him out of whatever dark walls he'd hidden behind over the centuries, but maybe I was going about it the entirely wrong way. Maybe I should just... let him go when he needs to? He *did* chain me to a bed for an entire day which was wildly unacceptable but ever since then, he hadn't left my side. Not really.

And honestly? It's not like he'd stay away even if he did leave the house. Zaliver had a persistent habit of popping right back in whenever he felt like it, like some controlling,

handsome shadow. Whether it was to "check in" or just remind me that he existed as if I could ever forget. The man was completely impossible to forget. Not even deep hypnosis could erase him from my mind.

I snorted quietly to myself, amused and annoyed at the exact same time.

So, if I wanted to keep messing with him to keep tugging at his massive alpha pride I'd need a completely different angle. One that hit just as hard, but maybe proved a little less... restrictive for both of us. Or maybe I should just let this whole petty revenge plan go entirely?

Nah.

But then again... we could always try talking. Like two normal, functional people. But that would require real promises and mutual understanding, and maybe that just wasn't us yet. Maybe we were both better at physical action than vulnerable words. We weren't exactly the "let's-sit-and-share-our-innermost-feelings" type of couple.

Couple.

Was that what we even were to each other now?

If I did decide to let him roam freely again, I could easily use that time to my distinct advantage. Catch him completely off-guard. Flip the tables on him. The sheer thought gave me a subtle wave of satisfaction.

Still, I groaned aloud, dragging a wet hand down my warm face. I was overthinking everything again. Doubting myself. My brain simply wouldn't shut up, my emotions were entirely tangled, and something foreign stirred deep down inside me like a restless whisper that didn't belong to me or my wolf.

No... this sensation was entirely different. Heavier. Wilder. And it was coming directly from inside my own soul.

It had to be her. My new beast. The strange, rapidly growing awareness that had started surfacing lately. Not my wolf, and not my standard human emotions something else entirely.

Great. Just another massive mystery to figure out.

The open sky stretched endlessly above me, and I closed my eyes, letting the soft ocean breeze dance gently across my wet skin. The distinct scent of salt, wild coastal flowers, and something uniquely tropical filled my lungs. It was wild, intoxicating, and strangely soothing. The nearby sea had once made me deeply uneasy, but my wolf had grown used to it over time embraced it, even.

Was I really ready for this massive change? For an entirely new form?

The question had been hovering silently in the back of my mind for days, but I hadn't dared to face it head-on until right now. I didn't know much of anything about what actually becoming a Lycan entailed how the transformation worked, or how vastly different it was from being a standard werewolf. I'd need to demand answers from Zaliver. And this time, he'd actually have to give me straightforward answers, not just cryptic words, vague warnings, or physical distractions.

The absolute truth was, it terrified me. I'd only ever known my wolf. She'd been an integral part of me for as long as I could remember: my anchor, my fire, my second half. But now, the terrifying possibility of becoming something... *more*? Or maybe just something else entirely it made my stomach twist into painful knots. Lycans were the exact kind of ancient creatures whispered about in dark fear, wrapped in bloody myths and terrifying legends.

And what on earth would my parents think if they ever found out?

A sudden, sharp pang of intense guilt hit me square in the chest. *Crap*. I hadn't even called them since all of this crazy drama went down. I groaned loudly and smacked the palm of my hand against the water's surface. "I'll call them later," I muttered to the empty air.

I slipped beneath the surface one last time, letting the cool water swallow me whole. Swimming helped silence the endless chaos screaming in my head, and for a long while, I just let myself float and move effortlessly through the deep end until my muscles burned and my mind went blissfully blank.

An hour must have passed before I finally climbed out of the pool and wrapped myself tightly in a large towel, water trailing down my legs as I padded inside the glass back

doors. I stopped dead in my tracks when I noticed Zaliver pacing frantically up and down the hallway just ahead, an open door standing right in front of him. His bare feet moved completely silently over the hard floor, but I could feel the intense, suffocating tension rolling off his body like an oncoming storm.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

I leaned against the hallway wall and watched quietly. He paused for a second he clearly knew I was there, but didn't immediately acknowledge me. That was fine. I stayed still, listening to the dark edge in his voice.

"Find the damn entrance. That door doesn't just vanish, and you know it," he growled into his phone, his voice sharp and dangerously low. "I expect this handled before I get back. If you can't "

The person on the other end responded quickly, their tone almost nervous over the speaker. "I'll locate the door, sir. I apologize for the delay. It'll be done before your return."

Zaliver's lips curled into a bitter scowl, eyes locked onto the floorboards as if they had personally offended him.

"It better be and fast," he snapped before abruptly hanging up. He stood frozen for a moment, then drew in a deep breath and rolled his neck until the joint cracked loudly.

When he finally turned, his piercing gaze found mine. Some of the harshness instantly faded from his features as he took me in.

"Work trouble?" I asked gently, my voice a bit hoarse from the long swim.

He nodded slowly, his eyes flicking downward. That's when I suddenly remembered I was standing there in just a damp towel. Heat crept up my neck, and I pulled the fabric tighter around my chest, suddenly hyperaware of every stray drop of water sliding down my skin... and every inch of bare flesh he could see.

Zaliver's dark hair was as effortlessly messy as ever, a few strands brushing against his forehead. His broad shoulders were tense, but he looked relaxed now, like something heavy had shifted the moment he saw me. He slid his phone into the pocket of his low-slung pajama bottoms and started walking toward me, his stride confident and slow.

"You went for a swim," he said, his tone almost conversational.

"Yeah... the pool's amazing " I started, but he cut me off completely.

"You, love, are breathtakingly beautiful," he said in a deep, husky voice. "Absolutely ravishing."

I froze, my breath catching in my throat. His eyes smoldered, locked onto me like I was the only thing that existed in the entire world.

My wolf perked up instantly in my mind, purring with intense interest.

Take me now then, she whispered eagerly.

Shut it, I hissed back at her.

Look at that body... mmm, I'd love to run my tongue down those abs.

Seriously? You're really not helping.

What part of 'shut it down' do you not understand? I want to hump, thump, and

I mentally tuned her out before she could finish that train of thought.

Zaliver stepped closer until his massive presence completely overwhelmed mine. His hand rose slowly, then brushed against my cheek with a gentleness I hadn't expected. His thumb stroked my damp skin, and the sheer sensation was enough to make me forget how to breathe. His face hovered inches above mine, those deep, impossible blue eyes shining with something soft and playful.

My stomach flipped. No it clenched tight.

Why was he always this ridiculously hot?

Desire crept up my spine and curled low in my belly. He didn't even have to try, and yet here I was, one single heartbeat away from throwing my towel to the floor and leaping straight into his arms. My wolf was whispering all sorts of wicked things, adding fuel to a fire I was barely holding back.

And Goddess, she wasn't entirely wrong.

Zaliver leaned in so close I could feel the intense heat radiating off his bare skin. His nose grazed down the side of my neck, slow and deliberate, and I froze at the sudden intimacy of the gesture. He inhaled softly against my skin, like I was some rare scent he'd been craving for days.

"You smell incredible," he murmured, his voice husky with something I didn't want to put a name to.

I let out the most embarrassing, awkward laugh. The kind that bursts out when your nerves tangle with pure confusion, leaving you instantly regretting your choices.

"Uh... I smell like chlorine," I said quickly, waving a dismissive hand. "Like, pool chemicals and minor regret."

He pulled back slightly and tilted his head, his eyes scanning my face like he was seeing me for the very first time... or maybe seeing something new in me that I didn't quite understand yet. That look made my chest tighten.

"No," he said slowly. "You smell... sweeter. Richer. It's addicting. Makes me want to taste" His voice dipped into something dangerously seductive, but he didn't finish the sentence. Instead, a smug grin tugged at the corner of his lips, like he knew exactly what kind of chaotic effect he was having on me.

I took a step back, my heart pounding against my ribs and my cheeks burning. *Nope. Not falling for it.*

"All right, you absolute weirdo," I said with a weak chuckle, trying to pull myself firmly back into reality.

He rolled his eyes and dropped his hands with a dramatic shake of the iron chains still binding his wrists. They clinked together loudly, the metal echoing through the open hallway. I stared down at them for a long moment, deeply conflicted.

"Fine," I sighed, yielding. "You can take them off."

He paused, his eyes narrowing at me in genuine disbelief. "You're sure you know what you're saying?"

I nodded. "Yeah."

"I'm free?" he asked softly, as if the words themselves were sacred.

"From the house? Yeah. From me? Not even close," I said, flashing a confident smirk of my own.

His dark expression lit up with something both tender and deeply mischievous. "Good. I wouldn't ever want to be."

With one sharp, sudden motion, he brought his hands together. There was a brief moment of intense pressure, and then *snap*. The heavy iron chains gave way like brittle twigs under his raw strength, crumbling into sharp pieces around his fingers. My eyes widened as I took in the terrifying display of power.

"Damn..."

Zaliver beamed down at me like a competitive kid who had just broken the world record for arm wrestling.

I'm going to shower, I thought to myself, mentally mapping out my next move. *Is he?*

"Yes," he said instantly, his eyes twinkling with sudden excitement.

I blinked in shock. "What?"

"Yes, I'll join you."

He reached out for the towel wrapped around my body and tugged lightly. I slapped his hand away with a loud yelp and stumbled back a quick step.

"I wasn't thinking that, dumbass!" I sputtered, my face turning bright red. "I meant are you leaving the house?"

He didn't even blink. "Nope. I'm staying right here for the rest of the day."

With an exasperated groan, I trudged up the stairs to grab some clean clothes from the master bedroom. Zaliver followed silently behind me, though his irritated expression made it obvious he wasn't thrilled about being sent packing to the guest room for his stuff. When I tried to shut the bedroom door in his face, he caught the frame easily with both hands, pushing it open just enough to peer inside.

I narrowed my eyes at him. "What now?"

He gave me a perfectly serious look. "I'm just saying... we should shower together. Save water. Be eco-friendly and all that."

I stared deadpan at him. "Really?"

"Absolutely. It's the responsible thing to do."

Rolling my eyes, I looked up toward the ceiling. "Dear Moon Goddess, grant me patience."

Then I smiled sweetly and tilted my head up at him. "Wanna really save water, Alpha?"

He perked up like a hopeful pup, his eyes lighting with boyish anticipation. "Yes!"

"Then go shower in the ocean." I slammed the heavy door right in his face and grinned as I heard his frustrated growl echo loudly on the other side.

I couldn't help the loud snort of laughter that escaped me.

A little while later, I was rinsing conditioner out of my hair, letting the hot water soothe the sudden ache building at the base of my skull. That's when I heard it again: a soft tapping, barely noticeable at first, then growing heavier and far more insistent.

Thud. Thud. Thud.

I rubbed at my scalp, half-wondering if I was just imagining things over the sound of the running water. When the strange pounding finally stopped, I shook it off and reached for my body wash.

The water felt remarkably warm now. Almost too warm.

Chapter 114: Unraveling from the Inside

Vivian's POV

I didn't even realize how wildly uneven my breathing had become until my chest gave a painful, desperate thud in protest. I twisted the shower dial, letting cold water rush over me while turning the hot tap all the way down. It didn't help. My forehead pressed against the wet tiled wall, the cold droplets sliding over my skin like tiny burning needles, doing absolutely nothing to cool the inferno blazing beneath my flesh.

I could breathe, technically, but it didn't feel like nearly enough oxygen. Each inhale felt shallow and strained, as if my lungs were fighting just to function. My limbs trembled violently under me, feeling both impossibly heavy and far too weak at once, while a slow, pulsing ache began to grow behind my eyes. Dull at first, but steadily gaining strength like something trying to claw its way out of my skull.

Heat licked under my skin. Not the warmth of the shower, but something deeper, alive, and thoroughly unnatural. I could feel sweat slicking my back, even with the freezing water pelting me. Panic began to scratch viciously at my insides.

This wasn't normal. None of it was.

I forced myself upright, dizzy and completely disoriented. The shower had done nothing but make it infinitely worse. I reached for the dial to turn it off, only for a sudden, sharp agony to slam into my spine with such force that I stumbled backward, nearly slipping on the wet floor. I cried out loudly, catching myself on the metal railing just in time.

Pain. Radiating, searing, spreading through every fiber of my being.

Every single nerve ending in my body lit up at once. My back, my chest, even my gums. My vision swam, my eyes struggling to stay focused as intense pressure bloomed behind them. My legs trembled as I fumbled blindly for a towel, barely managing to wrap it around myself before dragging my trembling body toward the sink. I leaned heavily on the cool marble counter, bracing myself with shaking arms.

The mirror was thick with fog from the steam, but I wiped it away with a trembling hand and froze dead in my tracks.

Claws. My claws were out shifting erratically, lengthening and retracting with zero control. My fingertips throbbed with each heavy pulse of pain.

Something was wrong. So very wrong.

My reflection barely looked human anymore. My wet hair clung to my pale skin like dark ink, my face gaunt and drawn. My eyes were wide, filled with a feverish sheen. My pupils were far too large, swallowing the natural color of my irises, but what little brown remained flickered wildly between light and dark, like it couldn't decide who or what I was.

And my gums gods, they were bright red and aching, raw like they'd been torn apart from the inside. I lifted a clawed hand to touch them but stopped, terrified I'd slice my own skin open without meaning to.

What is happening to me?

Then the pain in my back returned sharp, pinpointed, like someone was driving massive talons straight into me from the inside out. I gasped and staggered backward, my legs giving out completely. I collapsed hard to the floor, cold tiles pressing against my overheated skin as my body twisted and trembled in sheer agony.

My wolf whimpered deep inside me, terrified and utterly confused. I felt like I was unraveling, coming apart cell by cell. No control. No understanding. Just absolute chaos ripping through every inch of me.

I couldn't breathe.

Couldn't think.

Couldn't fight it.

Zaliver. I need Zaliver.

I clawed my way out of the bathroom, dragging myself slowly across the floorboards. The towel slipped away, my pride completely forgotten. I made it to the edge of the bed before my remaining strength gave out entirely. I collapsed there, half on the floor, half on the rug, my chest heaving as darkness closed in around the edges of my vision.

My heart thundered like a war drum, beating so fast I thought it might burst right through my ribs. The sharp scent of blood filled my nose my own blood. I had clenched my fists so tight that my wild claws had punctured my palms, slicing open skin and drawing crimson. Still, I didn't care. I was far beyond pain. Or maybe just drowning in it.

And then

The door slammed open with a deafening bang.

Zaliver stormed into the room, wild-eyed and frantic, like he'd felt every single surge of agony I was going through via our mate bond. His gaze found me instantly, and he dropped to his knees beside me without hesitation. His hands hovered over my shaking body, desperately unsure where to touch without causing me more pain. I looked up at him, tears slipping freely from my eyes, my throat raw.

"It hurts," I whispered, the words barely audible. But I knew he heard every syllable.

Because the agony in my body wasn't just mine anymore. He was feeling it too.

Zaliver looked down at me, his striking face contorted in sheer anguish, his eyes scanning my broken form as if trying to memorize every bruise, every fracture. The pain in his expression mirrored the inferno burning through me. After a agonizing moment, he cursed harshly under his breath and gently lifted me into his arms.

A sharp scream tore from my throat as my body protested the sudden movement, pain spiking everywhere at once.

"I'm so sorry. You're going to be okay. I've got you. You're safe now. I promise," he whispered again and again, his voice carrying a tone unlike anything I'd ever heard from him. There was fear in it raw, desperate fear and that terrified me far more than the physical pain did.

I couldn't keep my eyes open. I let them fall shut and buried my face in the crook of his neck, inhaling the deeply familiar, grounding scent of pine, earth, and something uniquely him. He moved swiftly, yet with extreme care, each rapid step sending jolts of pain through me. Still, I found profound comfort in his presence the heat of his skin, the way his warm lips brushed my forehead, the soft murmurs he let slip between tender kisses.

His scent wrapped around me like a heavy blanket, easing my panic little by little. I felt the rush of cool wind against my skin, fast and fresh, and then his steps slowed down. I cracked my eyes open just a sliver. We were out in the forest, surrounded by towering ancient trees and tangled vines. Sunlight broke through the canopy in golden patches, illuminating the path he walked. Somewhere nearby, I heard the steady, powerful rush of water.

I wanted to turn my head to see the source, but even the thought triggered a sharp wave of pain in my chest that made me cry out softly.

Zaliver's pace quickened immediately.

The air turned significantly colder. Then my toes touched water. My towel clung heavily to my skin as he stepped deeper into the flowing stream. My breath hitched when I realized he was carrying me directly into the current. Over his broad shoulder, I glimpsed a towering waterfall in the distance, its heavy spray misting the air.

The biting cold seeped into me fast, numbing my skin. For a brief moment, I thought the pain might finally fade, but it clung to me even as the chill dulled its sharp edges. I kept my arms wrapped tightly around Zaliver's bare chest as he moved deeper, the river rising to his ribs and splashing against my side.

"Vivian, I need you to shift," he said, raw panic threading clearly through his deep voice.

I tried to respond, but the only sound I could manage was a weak, pathetic groan. My thoughts were completely scattered, my mind fogged with blinding pain and pure exhaustion. I just wanted to let go. Sleep. Drift away.

"Hey! No don't fade on me. Stay with me. Please, baby," he begged, shaking me gently in his arms. "Shift for me. I know you're tired, but you'll feel better. I promise."

I tilted my head back slightly to meet his eyes. There was something so raw and desperate in his gaze something that shattered the cold fear trying to pull me under.

"Okay," I breathed, though I wasn't sure if I physically could.

I closed my eyes and reached deep inward, searching for my wolf... but she wasn't responding. I felt her, curled up tight in a dark corner of my mind, trembling violently. Her paws were clamped over her ears, desperately blocking something out. I called to her, pleaded with her, but she refused to answer me.

"I can't," I whispered, my voice trembling with utter hopelessness.

Zaliver's arms tightened protectively around me. "Yes, you can. Please, Vivian. Try again. My little cloud, I know you can do this."

His words cut straight through the heavy haze, gentler this time. I forced my eyes shut again, and instead of calling out to my terrified wolf, I focused entirely on him the soothing warmth of his skin against mine, the steady, rhythmic beat of his heart, the grounding comfort of his voice.

Even standing in the freezing river, Zaliver radiated intense heat. I clung to that warmth like it was the only anchor keeping me tied to this world.

And then... something deep inside me began to stir.

Chapter 115: The Weight of the Bond

I closed my eyes and clung to the sound of his voice it was soft, broken in that rare, fragile way that pierced directly through my heavy haze like sunlight cutting through dense fog. Even before his actual words reached me, I could hear it. His heartbeat.

Strong. Steady. So impossibly loud in my ears, it called to me like a beacon in the dark.

My wolf stirred at the deeply familiar rhythm, lifting her head slowly, like she'd just remembered where she truly belonged.

Home, she murmured softly within me. We're home. We're safe.

I reached out to her without hesitation. Just that one simple word from her made everything inside my chaotic soul shift. And she answered me, curling around my shattered consciousness like a warm, protective blanket.

"Oh thank the gods," Zaliver breathed as I finally began to move in his arms. Slowly, my body began to shift: bones snapping into place, muscles stretching and reforming, the agonizing pain leaving my limbs like the tide retreating from the shore.

When the transformation was complete, I was a wolf once more, but something deep inside me still panicked violently. I couldn't get my footing in the shifting water. My instincts screamed like I was still drowning, and I began to flail helplessly against the current.

But Zaliver was already right there.

His massive arms steadied me immediately. "It's okay," he whispered, his intense eyes locked on mine. "I've got you."

He held my head gently, resting it against his shoulder, while his other hand supported my sleek body beneath the cold surface of the stream. His strength didn't waver for even a single second. The chill around me dulled the persistent pain clinging to my nerves, almost like he was physically pulling the suffering right out of me.

I let out a slow, heavy breath, relief pouring out with it.

"Feeling better?" he asked, scooping cold water into his palm and letting it run over my fur with long, gentle strokes.

"Yes," I murmured through our mental bond, my voice barely a whisper inside his mind.

His lips curved into a faint, relieved smile. "Good," he replied softly.

Then he leaned in close and brushed his warm nose against my snout, his affection so tender and raw that I almost didn't know how to process it.

I blinked slowly, looking past his broad shoulder into the dark, silent forest. Nothing stirred. Even the wild animals seemed to have hidden away, sensing the storm that hovered ominously over us.

"What's happening to me?" I asked quietly through the bond, watching the completely still trees.

Zaliver sighed heavily, rubbing a wet hand over his face before meeting my eyes again. "We've been apart too long "

"And whose fault is that?" The sharp words slipped out before I could stop them sharper than I'd intended, but I didn't regret saying them.

He didn't flinch at the accusation. Instead, he looked even more visibly weighed down by the reality of it.

"I know," he said, his voice dropping low. "And every time we're separated, your body reacts worse than the last. You're a born werewolf. Your bond doesn't need constant physical connection to survive, but me? I'm a lycan. My mark... it's different. Stronger.

Far more demanding. What we have, Vivian, it's not ordinary. It's not written in any of the ancient books. There's no guide for this specific bond we share. It's unique. One of a kind."

His hand moved up to gently cup the back of my furry head as he continued, speaking more to himself now than to me.

"I don't think either of us will die from being apart... but sometimes I think this distance it's the closest thing to death I've ever felt. Your shift is getting closer. Your body is desperately trying to prepare, to adapt to what's coming. But it doesn't know how. You're not just a wolf anymore. You're becoming something entirely new. And it's because of me."

He looked straight into my eyes, pure guilt written in every single line of his face.

"I did this to you."

He paused, his jaw clenching tightly. Then, like floodgates breaking open, the truth poured out of him.

"You're right I'm a bastard. I forced my mark on you without asking. Changed everything about your life with zero warning. And I can never take that back. I'm so sorry you're stuck with someone like me: a complete wreck of a man trying to piece himself together again. A possessive, overbearing monster who can't stand to let you out of his sight. I'm sorry that out of everyone in the entire world... your mate had to be me."

His voice cracked at the end, and I felt my own emotional pain rise to meet his through the connection.

"I'm sorry I'm selfish enough to put my absolute need for you above everything else, even your own happiness. I'm sorry I let my fear turn me into this. And gods, I'm so sorry I'm not the man you deserve."

"Stop," I whispered brokenly, my heart shattering into pieces as I stared at him.

His eyes those bright, storm-tossed blue eyes looked so profoundly haunted. He meant every single word. Every last one.

And it tore me completely apart.

Because no matter how furious I had been, no matter how many times he'd hurt me with his silence, his arrogance, and his stubbornness... I still felt it.

That maddening, undeniable pull between us.

The bond.

Him.

Us.

"But " He frowned, his brows knitting together like he couldn't fathom why his sincere apology was stinging me so deeply.

"Don't talk about yourself like that," I said, my voice sharper than I intended through the bond.

If I wasn't so completely worn down my body aching from the forced shift, my heart utterly exhausted from the emotional tug-of-war I would've forced myself to shift right back to human form just to grab his face, kiss him breathless, and yell some actual sense into him.

He stared down at me. Not just a quick glance, but a deep, soul-searching stare that went straight through my defenses. I felt him gently tug at the bond between us, and this time, I didn't fight it. I let the walls fall completely. Even though part of me still flinched at the terrifying idea of being so utterly exposed, I needed him to feel what I felt. To see that I meant what I was saying, and that hearing him tear himself apart hurt me deeply.

It wasn't just self-loathing on his part. It was like he didn't even know how to exist properly anymore. Like he was only breathing because his body hadn't given up on the habit yet.

"You're not a monster," I said quietly, pushing every single ounce of my love through the open bond. "You're Zaliver. My Zaliver."

His lips parted like he wanted to protest, but instead, he nodded once. "Okay," he said, though his voice still trembled with heavy doubt.

That was enough for now.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 116: Underneath the Surface

"Can you talk about something else?" I asked softly through the bond, curling tighter against his warm chest. "I don't care what it is. I just... I want to hear your voice."

He gave me a small, silent nod. Then, to my absolute surprise, he didn't speak he started to sing.

Softly at first. Almost unsure of himself. He kept his gaze averted, his focus entirely on my wet fur as he gently ran his broad hands through it, rinsing the thick strands with the cool

river water. But that voice... gods, that voice. It was deep, rich, and laced with a quiet sorrow something raw, aching, and profoundly real.

I recognized the song almost immediately.

Underneath by Adam Lambert.

I had asked him once before what his favorite song was, and he had brushed it off like the answer didn't matter. Now I finally knew why. Because the lyrics were too honest. Too open. They told the exact truth he tried so desperately to bury beneath dominance, silence, and duty.

He sang it as if it were the first time he was allowing another soul to hear his true pain. I listened spellbound, completely breathless. Each word was heavy with unspoken meaning. Each note pulled at the mate bond between us until I felt him completely.

No masks.

No titles.

Just Zaliver.

And he was beautiful. Not the kind of beauty that came merely from sharp features or piercing blue eyes, but the kind that sang quietly from the darkest shadows haunted, steady, and utterly real.

My heavy eyelids fluttered closed. His voice carried me into a profound stillness I hadn't felt in days. For once, the chaotic noise in my head calmed, completely soothed by the melody of a man who, despite everything, loved me enough to sing his pain just to comfort mine.

Two broken souls, trying to heal each other in the dark.

I fell asleep wrapped in his arms, listening to a song that belonged to no one else but him.

Waking up cradled in Zaliver's arms, with the gentle coolness of the river water lapping around me, felt like a strange kind of peace one I hadn't known I desperately needed. My mind was quiet, and my body no longer ached like it had during the shift. The heavy exhaustion that had once clung to me like a second skin had completely lifted, replaced with a calm sense of rest.

Zaliver hadn't moved much at all. His arms still held me close, his fingers threading slowly and rhythmically through my fur, as if memorizing every single inch of me. Yet, I could sense the underlying tension in his body his muscles were tight, his breathing slightly uneven. Something was still deeply troubling him.

The sky above us was still lit with fading golden sunlight, casting a soft glow across the water's moving surface. I had no idea how long I'd been asleep, but I knew it had been a significant while.

Without a word, I shifted back into my human form while still nestled securely in his arms. My body felt surprisingly lighter, as if I'd just come out of an intense workout sore, but satisfied. No agony remained. Just the lingering, pleasant buzz of rapid healing.

Zaliver looked down at me, his expression completely unreadable. His blue eyes were clouded with something heavy conflict? Desire? I couldn't quite tell. I didn't pull away. Instead, I slid my hands up to rest gently on his bare shoulders, grounding myself in his intense heat.

"How long was I out?" I asked softly. My voice came out hoarse, a little raw from all the crying and shifting.

He didn't answer right away. His silence made my heart flutter with sudden uncertainty.

"Zaliver?" I prompted again, my eyes locking directly with his.

Then, without a word of warning, he reached up and cupped the side of my face, pulling me close with a sudden intensity that stole my breath and then stole my lips.

His mouth crashed onto mine, fierce and ravenous. The kind of kiss that didn't bother asking for permission it simply took. At first, I froze, startled by how abruptly he moved, but then a low growl rumbled deep in his chest, vibrating through my entire body, and I melted completely against him.

It wasn't slow or tender. It was desperate. Wild. His lips claimed mine in an unrelenting rhythm, tugging, pulling, and coaxing a burning fire from my core that I didn't know I still had in me.

My fingers tangled tightly into his dark, wet hair, fisting the strands as I yanked him closer, needing more. A deep, primal sound escaped his throat that sent a wave of heat flashing through me. The cold river around us should've grounded me, but instead, it made the feverish heat between our bodies feel even more unbearable.

He grabbed a handful of my hair and tugged with the same fierce force I'd used, making me gasp not from pain, but from the unexpected thrill that shot straight down my spine. His tongue slipped past my lips in that exact instant, dominating my mouth without hesitation. His taste flooded my senses: dark, intoxicating, and intimately familiar. Instinctively, I responded, letting my mouth move with his in perfect sync, like our bodies already knew this primal rhythm by heart.

Time completely blurred around us. We kissed like we needed each other just to breathe like stopping for even a second would shatter something far too fragile to risk.

But then I felt his large hand sliding down my wet thigh, his fingers slipping beneath my leg to cup under my butt and I froze.

My eyes flew wide open.

Oh Goddess.

The only thing I was wearing was a soaked, flimsy towel clinging to me like a loose whisper.

Panicked, I yanked my hands off him and fumbled frantically to pull the towel back up, tugging it over my chest as a blazing blush exploded across my cheeks. I tried to back away, only to realize something else entirely my feet weren't anywhere near the bottom of the stream.

He was holding my entire weight completely above the water.

Zaliver's grip tightened around my waist, pulling me flush against his bare chest with zero apology. His gaze had darkened significantly, his eyes nearly black with heavily restrained desire. The hand beneath my hip lifted me slightly, guiding one of my legs to wrap tightly around his waist. The wet towel rode up with the motion, and my blush deepened into a fever pitch.

"Zaliver," I breathed, my voice trembling.

His hold didn't waver for a second. Neither did his dark eyes.

And suddenly, I realized just how utterly lost I was to him and how terrifyingly good it felt. Where on earth was all of this coming from? One second, I was reeling from the excruciating ache of transformation, and the next, I was burning in a completely different way.

But honestly? I didn't care.

Tip: You can use left, right, A and D keyboard keys to browse between chapters.

Chapter 117: Burning on the Edge

Vivian's POV

Zaliver leaned down, his burning lips searing a path along the curve of my neck, leaving wet, open-mouthed kisses in his wake. He wasn't being gentle. He wasn't even trying to be quiet about it. His mouth moved with fierce purpose, dragging a ragged moan right out of me before I could even think to bite it back.

"What are you doing?" I breathed, my voice trembling with a raw need I hadn't expected. It was low, barely a whisper, but I hated how utterly desperate I sounded.

"Mine," he growled against my flushed skin. That single word gruff, primal, possessive ignited an immediate fire deep inside me.

I didn't even get to finish my train of thought before he pressed his lips to the exact place where his mark had settled into my skin. The sensation slammed into me like a blinding bolt of lightning. I gasped no, moaned loudly completely taken over by the electric heat pulsing through my body from that single point of contact.

I had forgotten what it felt like. The sheer intensity. The ancient bond. The raging fire.

Every single time his lips brushed my skin, my whole body came violently alive. It was like he was pulling at the threads of the bond itself with every kiss, making my skin hyperaware, making *me* hypersensitive. My wet towel slipped further down, but I didn't care in the slightest. I flung my arms back around his broad neck, needing to anchor myself to his solid frame or I'd drown in the intensity of it all.

I pressed my hips directly into his, craving more of his intense warmth, more of his touch. He responded in kind, his hand skimming down my spine until it stopped at the loose edge of the towel. Then he paused, pulling back just enough to look down into my eyes.

His broad chest rose and fell rapidly. His eyes dark, intense, and wild searched mine. But I didn't need him to ask for permission. I didn't want him to. My body had already answered for me.

I slid one hand up into his dark, damp hair, gripping the strands tightly, and tugged his face to the side. My lips found the curve of his neck just as his hand slipped beneath the wet towel to cup my bare skin.

The direct contact made me gasp straight against his flesh.

I wrapped my other leg tightly around his waist, securing myself to him completely, and his free hand dropped down to grab my hip. His hands gripped me with such firm, unyielding need that it made my stomach flip in anticipation. I used the angle to press closer, leaning up just enough to kiss along his jawline, then down his throat, back and forth, mimicking everything he had done to me.

When I reached the spot where my mark rested on him where his neck met his shoulder I nipped gently at his skin, curious to see how he'd react.

And oh, did he react.

His grip on me tightened instantly, squeezing with enough raw force to make me let out a surprised squeak. He groaned deep guttural, raw, and heavy and bucked his hips forward,

grinding me down onto him with brutal need. The movement sent a devastating shockwave of pure pleasure straight through me.

That sound. That moan. I wanted to hear it over and over again. I wanted to drown in it.

Grinning wickedly, I bit down on the exact same spot again, then blew a gentle stream of air across his damp skin. His entire body jolted under me. He grunted again, grinding harder into me, and I could feel everything. The cold river water had turned his pajama pants into a second skin, and there was absolutely no mistaking what pressed between us.

His erection pushed hard against me, and I instinctively rolled my hips, chasing the friction that teased me right on the razor edge of something dangerously addictive.

My fingers trailed down his wet back, nails dragging over his skin just enough to make him hiss through his teeth. He pulled away from my neck and kissed me again hot, possessive, and unrelenting.

And I kissed him back with every single thing I had.

I needed him. Not just physically, but emotionally, spiritually. I wanted all of him, right now, right here in this river. The pull between us was simply too strong to fight. His emotions swirled seamlessly with mine through the open bond, wrapping around us in a fever I had zero desire to escape.

If I didn't have him soon, I felt like I might literally shatter into a million pieces.

There were distant warning bells blaring somewhere in the back of my mind flashes of red, a strange sense that something wasn't quite right but I couldn't pin down what it was. The feeling teased the edges of my fading consciousness, like a forgotten word on the tip of my tongue.

Zaliver's hands gripped my hips firmly as he thrust upward once more, making my breath catch violently in my throat. A heavy shudder rolled through me, deep and primal. My body ached for more, my wolf clawing at the surface with the exact same desperate craving. Zaliver groaned harshly and suddenly pulled his head back. I mirrored him instinctively, both of us breathing heavily, ragged and completely raw.

"Fuck," he muttered, his voice thick with heavy restraint.

A short, breathless laugh escaped me. "You can say that again," I said, my gaze drifting down to his mouth. His lips were red and swollen from the kiss, and I felt a magnetic pull drawing me right back to them. I hadn't even realized I was leaning in until he pressed a warm hand firmly against my shoulder, gently pushing me back. I frowned at the physical space he created, missing the warmth of his mouth already. And there it was again that persistent buzz in the back of my mind. The warning I kept stubbornly ignoring.

"Oh man, never thought I'd be the one pulling away," he murmured under his breath, his large hands slipping down to rest solidly on my waist. My arms were still looped tightly around his neck, trying to tug him closer, but he didn't budge an inch.

"So don't," I whispered, my voice thick with lingering heat.

He arched a dark brow at me, then let out a heavy sigh. "As much as I'd love to claim you right now, I'd rather do it when we both have clear heads. And when you're not on the verge of going into heat."

His words slammed into me like a speeding freight train. That distant warning in my head suddenly roared to life, front and center.

My heat?

I blinked at him, completely stunned. My entire body went dead rigid in his arms.

Chapter 118: Shift in the Tides

Vivian's POV

Seeing the look of absolute shock on my face, Zaliver sighed softly and wrapped his strong arms around me, guiding my head gently to his bare chest. I could hear the steady, powerful beat of his heart under my ear, a grounding rhythm amidst the sudden storm of my thoughts.

"When a female werewolf enters heat," he began gently, his voice rumbling against my cheek, "she feels the effects full force unless her mate helps relieve them. Her scent shifts, drawing in unmated males like moths to a flame. But with you... your scent drives me

completely insane. It sends me into a lust haze I can't fully control. And it seems like my reaction only intensifies your heat. Your shifting into a new form might've triggered it too. Interesting."

His tone turned thoughtful at the end, as if he was cataloging this information like some fascinating new discovery.

Of course it was interesting to him. In the end, he got the mate. He got the bond. I was the one with the fire threatening to burn me from the inside out.

I was going into heat. Damn it.

Everything he said aligned with what I already knew. A female in heat went through stages, each more intense than the last, and the only way to cool the blaze was with her mate or medical intervention. Without either, she could be left suffering. Alone. Males didn't have cycles like this. But they could sense when a female's heat started, and they usually responded by becoming hyper-focused on mating and producing pups.

But if what Zaliver said was true, then every time I had a flicker of heat and he picked up on it, his reaction would spike mine... and suddenly the spark would explode into a full inferno. A vicious cycle of pheromones and instinct. Great.

Was I ready to mate?

The question felt like a heavy weight in my chest. I didn't even know how to answer it. My emotions were a whirlwind: part fear, part longing, part sheer confusion. I'd gone through my first heat at sixteen, and I remembered the pain like it was yesterday. It was nothing like the soft ache of cramps. It was brutal. Like being lit on fire from the inside, then blasted with freezing pressure. Like every nerve ending was being ripped open and set ablaze.

Did I really want to go through that again?

No.

But with Zaliver... could I handle it?

I shifted in his arms and looked up at him. For a moment, he looked completely at peace. His eyes—those piercing, oceanic blues—softened as they met mine. His arms tightened protectively around me, and for a second, I wondered if the universe had designed him to be this tempting on purpose... this magnetic. Maybe it wasn't just my heat talking.

Or maybe it was.

And that scared me most of all.

Zaliver lifted me out of the water with ease, scooping me up just like he had earlier. His strong arms wrapped around me with such certainty, like he was made to carry me. As we

left the warmth of the water behind, I quickly wrapped the towel tightly around myself. That's when it hit me.

Oh no.

He touched my butt.

He definitely felt my butt.

And worse—I let him.

Heat surged straight to my cheeks, burning me from the inside out. I buried my face against his broad chest to hide the rising blush, but the moment I peeked up, he raised an amused eyebrow down at me. Ugh. That smug, knowing look of his only made it ten times worse.

Why did I suddenly feel all shy and awkward around him? He was my mate. My partner. We'd been through hell and back already, hadn't we?

Then it clicked.

This was real. This entire thing—*us*—was real. The bond. The pull. The future. It wasn't some dream I'd wake up from or something I could keep brushing off as temporary. I was changing. I *had* changed. And now... now we were about to take the next step, one that would tie us together for life.

My fingers twitched nervously against the damp towel.

Funny how I always thought I was the type who could handle intense change without losing it, mostly because I usually reacted late. But this? This was that late reaction, hitting me full force in the middle of a walk back to the house after a casual swim and an accidental butt grab.

Matehood was one thing in theory, but living with it day by day? Feeling it settle in your bones and become part of your every breath? That was something else entirely.

I couldn't help but wonder—had I been holding back with Zaliver all along? Maybe not consciously, but somewhere deep inside me, had I been guarding myself? Afraid to fall too hard, too fast? I kept asking him to trust me... but had I truly trusted him?

God. I was a hypocrite.

Relationships require trust, yes, but true commitment? That demanded something deeper. Surrender. And that's not easy when your heart's been broken before, or when your past claws at your heels like mine does.

By the time we reached the house, my thoughts were a complete storm. Zaliver gently set me down, and for a moment we just stared at each other. He looked worried, like he could feel the unease rolling off me in waves but didn't know what to say. I gave him a weak smile and turned toward the stairs, my wet towel clinging to my skin.

Each step felt heavier than the last, my thoughts swirling so loudly I barely heard my own heartbeat.

All this because he touched my butt.

Halfway up the staircase, I stopped. I turned around slowly and looked down at him. Zaliver was still standing there like a statue, arms folded across his chest, his brow furrowed in deep concern.

Screw it.

I marched right back down the stairs, locking eyes with him. When I reached the bottom, I brushed past him then, without warning, planted both hands firmly on his behind.

He jolted.

"Whoa! Not what I was expecting!" he yelped, nearly leaping into the air.

Maybe grabbing his butt would reset the playing field. Maybe it would knock the anxiety right out of me.

I glanced down at my hands, still very much on him. His shorts were wet too, and clinging in all the right ways. His butt was... okay, I had to admit, impressive. Firm. Curved just enough to be sinful.

To prove my point to myself, I gave one cheek a firm pinch.

"Okay!" he squeaked, stepping away so fast he nearly tripped over his own feet.

I lifted my gaze, fully prepared to tell him to get back here because I wasn't done—

But then I saw it.

Zaliver. The terrifying, powerful Lupus Deus. Blushing.

His ears were bright pink. His cheeks flushed a deep rosy red. And his icy blue eyes kept darting back to me like he didn't know where else to look.

He was flustered. Completely flustered.

The sound that escaped me was sudden and uncontrollable. I burst into laughter—full-bellied and genuine. The sight of him, so thrown off by something as simple as me grabbing his butt, melted every ounce of tension I'd been carrying.

Maybe that was the thing about love—it wasn't always deep talks and overwhelming emotion. Sometimes it was silly, embarrassing, human moments that reminded you how much joy you could find in just being with each other.

And right now, I was going to enjoy every single second of making my mate squirm.

The Wolf God's Unwanted Luna

Vivian's POV

This definitely wasn't how I had imagined things going, but I couldn't help it. Seeing Zaliver all flustered and awkward? It was a rare sight, and honestly... kind of adorable. I gasped through my laughter, struggling to catch my breath as I doubled over slightly. I made sure my towel was securely tucked under my arms while I laughed. The cold water clung to my skin and made everything heavier, but I didn't care.

He stood across from me with his arms crossed tightly over his chest, that mix of frustration and reluctant amusement playing across his face. His cheeks had cooled slightly, but the tips of his ears still glowed bright red. I bit back another giggle.

"Well, glad to see you having such a good time at my expense," he muttered, his voice sulky but playful. "Even copped a feel, didn't you?"

Still grinning, I walked up to him and, on impulse, reached up and pinched both of his cheeks gently. "Aww, look at you, all "

Swish.

We both froze.

My arms had lifted. The towel hadn't survived.

Oh, goddess.

My wolf let out a delighted hiss in my head. *Yes! This is it, the moment we've been waiting for!*

Me? I just wanted to melt into the floorboards. Somehow, I always managed to get myself tangled in situations that were so far out of my league, it was laughable.

Before I could react, everything changed in an instant.

In a blinding flash, I was pinned hard against the wall Zaliver's lips crashing down onto mine with a heat that knocked the breath completely out of me. One of his massive hands held me firmly in place, while the other had my leg hooked securely around his hip, locking me close to him. I couldn't think. Couldn't breathe. The only question flickering through my fogged brain was: *Did he see?* Of course he did. There was no way he hadn't.

A wave of heat surged through me, more familiar than I liked. But it wasn't like before this wasn't the sharp, overwhelming agony of my usual heat cycles. This was... different. Warmer. Calmer. Like I was being pulled toward something entirely inevitable. And I knew the reason.

Zaliver.

My mate.

My hand slid up to the back of his neck, fingers tangling tightly in his damp hair as I pulled him even closer. I kissed him harder, desperate to keep him right there, to keep feeling this. My other hand gripped his, surprised when he squeezed back gently, like he was anchoring me through the storm.

He broke the kiss only to trail his mouth down my throat, his lips brushing against my skin in a way that made my head fall back with a heavy sigh. My wolf purred deep in my chest, completely unbothered about showing her approval. His hips pressed into mine, and I couldn't stop the moan that slipped out as he moved against me, the friction doing wicked things to my already fogged mind.

That voice in my head it wasn't just my wolf anymore. It sounded deeper, older. Not entirely me. Not entirely her. I didn't know what that meant. In that moment, I didn't care.

I shuddered as he began nipping at the mark he'd left on my neck, sending electric jolts through every inch of me. My skin felt like it was glowing. My senses were stretched tight. I arched into him, moving with him, my body begging for more. He growled low, the sound vibrating through his broad chest straight into mine, and I purred in response, both of us caught in something primal, something ancient.

Then his hand moved.

Up my waist. Slow. Careful. Almost reverent.

It hovered just beneath my breast, shaking slightly.

I held my breath, completely still.

"Mmm... ahhh," he groaned, but his voice cracked halfway through, turning the sound into something tortured.

He pulled back and crushed his mouth to mine one more time fierce, desperate, and possessive. But then he stopped cold.

His hand fell away. His breathing turned ragged.

And then, out of nowhere he punched the wall beside me. Hard. The drywall cracked with a sickening crunch, plaster dust falling in a fine cloud around us.

I jolted.

The fog in my brain began to clear just enough for me to register what was happening, only to realize he was already gone. One second he was right there, and the next? He had vanished. Just like that.

Leaving me completely alone. Pressed against a wall. Heart thundering in my chest. Towel on the floor.

And nothing but the lingering heat of him still clinging to my bare skin.

I stood there trembling, naked and utterly overwhelmed, as the heavy weight of everything that had just happened came crashing down on me. My knees buckled, and I collapsed onto the floor. I buried my face in my hands, desperately trying to stop the whirlwind of emotions threatening to drag me under.

If Zaliver hadn't stopped...

I didn't even want to think about what might have happened. That was the second time now. Both times I knew I was losing control, and both times he pulled away before I did something I wasn't ready for. I had to give him credit any other male might've given in without a second thought. The mate bond made things complicated, primal... blinding. But he didn't.

And now... he was gone. I couldn't sense him anywhere close. The bond between us felt distant, as if he'd put miles between us in seconds.

He probably ran for the hills.

"Oh goddess," I whispered aloud, my voice cracking in the quiet house. "What's happening to me?"

I could feel it my body and mind were completely at odds. One half of me craved him in the most desperate, primal way, and the other half screamed about everything that didn't make sense. Everything he'd done. Everything I still didn't understand about him.

Then a voice not mine echoed clearly inside my head.

"You're changing, silly. Of course your mind is trying to recall everything, so I can build a new perspective."

I froze dead in my tracks. That... that wasn't me. I hadn't spoken.

Lifting my face slowly from my hands, I stared ahead blankly at the empty hallway.

"You were in my head when I was..." I couldn't finish the sentence. My voice barely carried.

"When you were grinding on our mate? Yes. It's a pity he stopped. We really must find out why."

The world tilted around me. My heart pounded furiously against my ribs.

Mate. She had called him *our* mate.

I swallowed hard, my throat dry. "Are you the "

"The newer, better beast in you? Yes. Yes, I am."

It felt like someone had doused me in icy water. Reality snapped into focus with brutal clarity.

This was it. The final piece I'd been desperately avoiding. The definitive proof that things would never go back to how they were. I really was changing into something else.

"Oh yes, about that. You've been subconsciously blocking me out."

"What?" I whispered, my chest tightening painfully.

"You wouldn't let me speak. That's why you've been having those awful headaches, the tapping, the stabbing pain. Your wolf went along with your little silent treatment too. Which by the way wasn't very nice. And just so we're clear, do it again and I'll force my way to the front. Painfully."

Her voice turned cold and threatening, sending sharp shivers straight down my spine.

"You did all of that?"

"No. You did that, Vivian. By trying to deny me, you left me no choice but to fight my way out of the glass box you shoved me into. But I'm not your enemy I've been helping you. I'm the reason you've had the strength, the courage to do what you've done."

"Who do you think shut out the chaos in your head when you broke our mate's neck? That wasn't an accident, love. You did that."

My hands trembled violently as I stared down at them in sheer horror. I had... I had planned that moment to escape. But I never meant to hurt him. Not like that. Not to break his neck.

"That was you," I murmured, the truth sinking in like a lead weight.

Unlike my wolf, who appeared clearly in my mind's eye with warm fur, strong and familiar, this new voice had no real physical form. She wasn't tangible in the same way. Instead, she was something far darker a slithering storm of black and crimson smoke that never stayed still.

When I focused harder into my subconscious, I could almost make out the silhouette of something terrifyingly humanoid. Something upright and towering.

A beast.

The very same one that had once chased me through the dark forest.

And now, she was living inside me.

Chapter 120: Echoes in the Silence

Vivian's POV

I clutched both sides of my head, squeezing my eyes shut tight, desperate to block out everything the voice, the racing thoughts, the horrifying reality.

"No, no, no," I whispered over and over like a chant, as if repeating it enough times could magically force the world to change.

Her voice echoed inside my mind with a cold, terrifying kind of calm.

"Wishing me away won't do anything, but I'll leave you for now."

And just like that, she vanished. Not entirely, though. I could still feel her lingering presence, curled up somewhere in the dark depths of my subconscious like a dormant storm waiting for the right moment to wake again.

My wolf nudged forward, unsettled and deeply restless. Everything inside me felt scrambled, like static humming through my blood.

I needed to move. I needed something anything to distract me before I completely unraveled.

First things first: I had to get off the cold floor and stop looking like my entire world had just cracked wide open. I reached down, picked up the towel that had slipped earlier, and trudged upstairs to the bedroom, pausing only briefly to glance at the gaping hole in the hallway wall. A grim, physical reminder of the chaos I could barely hold together.

While I dressed, tugging on soft cotton and denim like armor, my mind flipped back and forth relentlessly. Should I stay in our room tonight? Would it even make a difference? Probably not. But it felt safer not to safer for me, and safer for everyone else in this house.

I tried sitting in the guest room for a minute, but that lasted all of three seconds.

Nope. Sitting meant thinking. And right now, thinking was dangerous. My brain had the potential to dig up far too much: Zaliver's sudden withdrawal, the mark on my skin, *her*, and the bond pulsing beneath my flesh.

I needed something mindless and completely solo. Something where I couldn't hurt anyone if I lost control again.

And that's how I ended up wandering into the library.

It was massive, lined with dark wooden shelves from floor to ceiling, smelling richly of old pages and quiet memories. It felt warm and homey in a way that almost didn't fit the sleek, modern architecture of the rest of the pack house. Plush chairs, worn-in couches, and a few bean bags were tucked into cozy corners the kind of space where you could easily lose hours without realizing it.

I collapsed onto one of the oversized couches with a random book from the shelf and a plate of leftover food I'd scavenged from the fridge. The words on the page blurred together a few times before I could finally force my brain to focus. But after a while, my pulse evened out, and I started to breathe again.

Hours passed like that quiet, still, and manageable.

Eventually, boredom crept back in. I found myself heading back upstairs, wandering into our shared room. It felt strange stepping inside, like walking into a room where a heavy conversation had been abruptly cut off mid-sentence.

I started looking around for the laptop, thinking internet rabbit holes would make a decent distraction. I checked near the bed where it usually sat.

Instead, I found something else entirely.

Lifting one of Zaliver's large pillows, two items stared right back at me: a neatly folded peach dress... and a small white plastic card.

Frowning in confusion, I picked them both up. The dress looked far too familiar. I unfolded it slowly, and the moment the soft fabric loosened, my own scent hit me like a physical wave. My brows drew tightly together.

Why would Zaliver have this hidden tucked under his pillow?

I glanced down at the white card, flipping it over in my hand.

I blinked in utter disbelief. "Of all the photos he could have of me... he chose my damn driver's license?"

It wasn't even a good photo just awkward, stiff, and unblinking like every other government ID shot in existence. I huffed a breath and shook my head, my lips twitching with a faint smile despite myself. Without overthinking it, I slid the card straight into my pocket. That one? I was definitely keeping.

But the dress... my dress... the exact one I had worn the day my parents came to visit...

I stared down at it, sitting on the edge of his side of the bed with the soft fabric bunched in my trembling hands. My chest felt tight again, but not in the chaotic, terrifying way it had earlier. No, this feeling was quieter. Confused. Hopeful. Maybe even a little aching.

Why would he keep it here, tucked close to where he slept like it meant the world to him?

I sat there, my eyes trained on the floor, the dress resting gently in my lap while a thousand questions swirled through my head with no answers only silence.

I lifted the fabric to my face and inhaled deeply.

Zaliver's scent was completely soaked into it warm, woody, and heady nearly masking the faint trace of my own scent that still clung to the fibers. My heart sank softly. Why was my dress under his pillow, carrying his scent like it belonged to him? Had he really been sleeping with it... and that stupid driver's license photo... ever since I left?

I closed my eyes and let out a long sigh. So much for losing myself in books. I could bury myself in ten different novels and it still wouldn't be enough to outrun everything pressing down on me. My thoughts were relentless.

I didn't even know if I could face him again. The memory of this morning made my cheeks burn all over again. He had seen me naked completely naked. I was sure he got a full

eyeful before I practically moaned against him like some heat-crazed she-wolf. I groaned loudly and dropped face-first onto the mattress, muffling my embarrassment into the heavy comforter.

"Smooth, Vivian. Real smooth," I muttered, the bed swallowing my embarrassed voice.

And as if my self-mortification wasn't enough, there was also Zaliver's brewing revenge plan simmering away in the background. Whatever he had planned for those who wronged us, I had a sinking feeling it wouldn't end easily for anyone involved. Add that to the uncontrollable heat rolling through me, the shifting chaos inside my head, and now this overwhelming avalanche of emotional confusion... I genuinely didn't know how much more weight I could carry.

Mating wasn't just a physical act it was huge. Life-changing. Permanent. Especially when one half of the bond was as clueless and inexperienced as I was, and the other... well, Zaliver definitely didn't give off 'virgin' energy. I grimaced at the thought.

My stomach twisted unpleasantly.

Just imagining him with someone else before me left a sour, bitter taste in my mouth. A low growl threatened to bubble up from my chest, but I shoved it down. There was no point in getting territorial over a past I couldn't change.